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ABSTRACT

Papers on linguistics and language teaching in this volume are the following: "The Revision Process in Academic Writing: From Pen and Paper to Word Processor" (Stephen Chadwick, Nigel Bruce); "Sentence Sequence and Coherence: In Search of Readers' Problems in Academic Discourse" (Desmond Allison); "Plural Marking in Hong Kong English" (Carol Budge); "A Reading Experiment with L2 Readers of English in Hong Kong--Effects of Rhetorical Structure of Expository Texts on Reading Comprehension" (Rebecca W. K. Foo); "Quis Custodiet...? Errors in Guides to English Usage for Hong Kong Students" (Mark Newbrook); and "Review of 'Code-Mixing and Code Choice: A Hong Kong Case Study' by John Gibbons" (Mark Newbrook). Editorial policy, a style sheet, notes on contributors, and an index to papers in volumes 1-11 are also included. (MSE)

# 12

# HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING





UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, LANGUAGE CENTRE APRIL 1989

# HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS & LANGUAGE TEACHING

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# THE REVISION PROCESS IN ACADEMIC WRITING: FROM PEN & PAPER TO WORD PROCESSOR

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## Part 1 : INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. The Process Approach

Teachers of academic writing have in recent years been turning their attention increasingly to the **process** of writing, and exploring process-oriented approaches to writing instruction (Murray 1978, Perl 1979 & Taylor 1984). Murray, for example, feels that the teaching profession's "normal obsession with product rather than process leads us towards dangerous misconceptions about the writing process," and that, "the process of discovery, of using language to find out what you are going to say, is a key part of the writing process".

This is not to underplay the importance of final products. Most writing eventually reaches a stage when the writer decides it is a 'final' product, whether that means readiness for publication, or simply for handing in to a teacher for assessment. The writer's aim is to reach a stage at which he is satisfied with his communication to the intended reader. Students of writing can only benefit from an approach which, instead of requiring a first draft as a final, unalterable product for assessment, encourages them to produce several drafts, with constructive feedback from tutors between drafts. Writing therefore goes through a kind of metamorphosis on its way to its final state, and it is important that students learn that this is a normal process even for a proficient and experienced writer.

Central to this notion of writing being a process, is the importance of the revision, or rewriting, stage. "...writing is a discovery procedure which relies heavily on the power of revision to clarify and refine that discovery" (Taylor 1984). It seems obvious that if students are to be able to clarify and refine what they want to say, then atomistic sentence-based or example-centred remedial instruction must be supplemented by the frequent revision of written drafts.

> "Teacher presentations of standard patterns of organization or discussions on how to support an argument certainly have their place, but there is no guarantee that the necessary skills will be transferred and that the students will be able to draw on the information when they actually need it. Showing students where their *own* arguments are weak or where *their* logic breaks down appears to be a more effective approach." (Taylor, 1984 - our italics)

Revising their own texts allows students the opportunity to reflect exclusively on their own writing problems and makes any feedback or commentary from the instructor immediately relevant. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between **first** drafts and **revised** drafts.

### 1.2. 1st Draft vs. Revised Draft

It is very difficult to make a clear distinction between, or even to clearly define, the notions of a **1st draft** and a **revised draft.** One difficulty in trying to make such a distinction is that a draft

exists first in the mind, and is altered both before and during the actual act of writing, through deletions, substitutions and additions (Marder 1982). Nevertheless, in the context of university assignments, which are often undertaken (at least at Hong Kong University) under great pressure from other academic claims on students' time and attention, we can, for the purposes of this paper, distinguish 1st draft from revised draft in the following terms (assuming the pen-and-paper or type-written method as the norm):

a) Since most students do not have time to craft a preliminary version, complete with on-going deletions, substitutions and additions, and then write out a neat, unblemished copy, **a first draft** is, in most respects, the same as a completed first attempt, intended for submission as under exam conditions. The limited amount of revision of the written text that does go on at this stage, before handing in the assignment, tends to be at the sentence, rather than discourse level. There may be some students who choose to revise and edit work and then recopy, but these would seem to be in the minority (see e.g. Foulds 1987).

Exactly how students go about preparing their 1st draft is difficult to pin down other than by eliciting subjective writing protocols (e.g. Hayes & Flower, 1981). The computer offers us the prospect of being able to register each editing intervention as part of a linear record; we hope to be able to employ this technique in the near future[1].

A 1st draft is generally uninfluenced by another opinion; one can be 'too close' to a 1st draft and unaware of one's audience. Sommers (1980) writes of student inability to "re-view their work again with different eyes".

b) **A revised draft**, on the other hand, is an attempt to "clarify and refine" and tends to be made after consultation with others, particularly tutors, thus increasing the sense of audience. Of course, students could well 'consult' themselves, through that inner dialogue which helps a writer to distance himself from a text and develop a greater sense of audience. This ideal, however, assumes that the students already possess the necessary metadiscoursal awareness to determine when they are not communicating successfully with their audience, and to be able to rectify any shortcomings. But, as Taylor (1984) puts it,

> "Lacking nativelike intuitions about vocabulary, syntax, tone, style, formality, and organizational patterns, students often cannot see problems in their own writing (Beach 1979, Perl 1979) and will need to rely extensively on positive, constructive feedback."

Hence, since the goal of our instruction is to help students to develop these intuitions and self-questioning strategies so that effective revision can take place before submitting a draft for comments, we must explore ways to ensure interim feedback and guidance on an individual basis, and not necessarily always from the classroom teacher. Eventually, one would hope to be able to rely on effective regular **peer** evaluation as an integral part of the process in the writing classroom. The important thing is that in helping students to develop these strategies, feedback should be given between drafts, and not merely as an assessment of a final product.

### 1.3. Holistic Writing

The emphasis in this paper is more on the contribution teachers can make to a move to a more learner-centred, process-oriented and **holistic** approach to the development of writing skills.

We need particularly to ask what it is exactly about students' writing that teachers are concerned with improving at the critical stage between the first and revised draft. In the area of academic expository writing, especially at the tertiary level, the emphasis has increasingly been placed on improving not only morpho-syntactic accuracy and fluency, but also rhetorical features like the cohesion, coherence, organization and overall communicativity (dare one say "communicative dynamism"[2]) of discourse. A concern with such features is what Marder (1982) calls the attempt to reduce the "entropy", or processing disorder, of the text in relation to the reader, by ensuring familiarity with content and an appropriate level and proportion of abstraction and density of relationships. All of these factors - and not simply grammaticality and fluency - contribute to the communicative quality of the text and consequently they all need addressing in the teacher's comments. This kind of feedback will enable the student to develop an ability to view the text 'holistically', to look beyond words, sentences, or even paragraphs, and to assess how well the entire text is achieving its rhetorical goals.

Researchers (Beach, 1976 and Sommers, 1978) have found that good writers have a much better grasp of both of these factors than poor writers. Good writers tend to think in terms of general patterns of development and view their work holistically, both at the conceptual and the revision stage of the writing process. It is therefore vital for writing teachers to address such issues. Windhover (1982) states that the main concern of an academic writing programme is that students "learn to view their own writing holistically so they can make major revisions." In short, a holistic approach to revision will enable students to develop the ability not only to judge whether the main verb in a given sentence agrees with its subject, but more importantly, to what extent their writing is appropriate for the rhetorical situation (genre) and how well it fulfils its rhetorical goals.

### 1.4. Re-writing Apprehension

Practical experience, however, has taught us that this emphasis on the process of writing and on producing several drafts has a number of drawbacks. One is that no matter how crucial the teacher makes the rewriting stage for students, there is no denying the drudgery of the process. Students face the prospect of re-writing with varying degrees of what Daly & Miller have called "writing apprehension" - although in this context we consider the term "**re-writing apprehension**" more appropriate. Re-writing can invoke both a sense of shame and disappointment at the failure of the first draft and apprehension at the thought of a time-consuming total re-write. Murray (1978) goes as far as to refer to a punishment factor when talking about re-writing. This may be due to the students' own feelings about rewriting, but can equally be a result of the way revision is viewed by the teacher.

Teachers who require rewrites do not necessarily do so because they see this as a necessary part of the writing process. In some cases a request for a rewrite may be restricted to those students whose work is felt to need the most radical revision because the finished product is below a certain standard. This approach seems to shift the focus away from the value of the process of revision and onto the product, since, as Higgins & Johns (1984) have noted, "implicitly the students are being trained to submit their first effort as the final version". The rewriting is only required because the first draft was an unacceptable final version.

Even if we assume that the teacher does impress upon students that revision is a necessary, routine and desirable phase in the writing process, there still remains a second important factor which increases rewriting apprehension, and which compounds the problem of a sense of punishment. This is what Kemmis (1979) calls "inauthentic labour". Phillips (1986) defines this as "the non-productive work generated as a side effect of the task to be accomplished". In the context of revising texts, this **non-productive work** is the laborious task of copying those parts of the first draft which one does not wish to change. Foulds (1987) recognizes that there is a "natural unwillingness" on the part of students to rewrite since this is indeed a "dreary business". Although

professional writers like Neil Simon might think of the rewriting phase as the "fun" part of writing[3], we cannot expect the same degree of commitment or involvement from students required to re-write routine academic reports or essays, especially when the task in large part consists of laborious and educationally (almost) valueless copying.

### 1.5. Rewriting or Revision

It is important at this point to make the crucial distinction between our use of the terms **rewriting** and **revision**. In this paper, we take rewriting to be the total rewriting of a text for lack of any simpler or shorter means of producing a significantly altered hand-written or typed version; the emphasis is on what the writer *does*: i.e. literally 'writing again', which may often be a largely mechanical operation involving extensive copying. Revision means literally "seeing again" and is a higher level cognitive operation, the process by which a text is critically overhauled to enhance its effectiveness in getting a message across to the reader.

If a text is "re-written", there is no connotation of the degree of alteration, merely the fact of alteration. Certainly, students often fail to see the value of "rewrite" revision in terms of substantive changes, since so much of their time is spent on semantically-empty copying. From a student's perspective, **revision** places the emphasis on the changes to be made - a constructive activity - while **rewriting** places the focus largely on what is to remain the same. Rewriting is therefore seen as a tedious but necessary consequence of revision.

### 1.6. The "Student-Centred" Approach

It is perhaps paradoxical that teachers increasingly adopting a "student-centred" approach to language instruction are also reluctant to demand wholesale rewriting of their students. The result is another important obstacle to teaching writing as a process. Even though teachers might believe in theory that the only satisfactory means of effecting holistic writing revision is to require extensive rewriting, in practice they are sensitive to the punishment-factor and to the non-productive labour involved when assigning a total rewrite . This sensitivity greatly affects what teachers routinely require from students. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, if the teacher wants to improve the communicative quality of the student's work after the first draft, we may assume, at least at the tertiary level, that there will be two levels of commentary. The first is at the rhetorical level, addressing the written discourse as a whole, while the second is at the morpho-syntactic level, limiting the focus to isolated words or sentences.

The question then arises as to which level of feedback the teacher expects the student to respond to at the revision stage. Because the teacher is aware of the non-productive labour and punishment factors, students are often only required to act on comments on grammar, vocabulary and style. More than that would involve large-scale rewriting and might seem an unreasonable request. Teachers might therefore require students to rewrite only parts of their texts. But if good writers, as Sommers suggests, conceptualize the blueprint of their draft as a whole when they revise, and are concerned primarily with finding "a framework, a pattern, or a design" for their argument, then instructors should be aiming to develop such skills. It would seem to defeat the object of the revision exercise to ask students to merely focus on certain parts of their texts.

If we are reluctant to make students revise their entire texts, then why do we make comments on rhetorical structure? The hope is, of course, that the student can internalize the comments and apply them to the next assignment. If, however, we agree with Taylor that in order to maximize the transference of skills from one situation to another students need constructive feedback on their own texts, then it would seem logical that they should also be encouraged to act directly on the teacher's comments on rhetorical structure.

We are faced then with an awkward dichotomy. On the one hand teachers feel rewriting to be essential if their students are going to develop a sense for what is good rhetorical organization, and on the other they are hesitant to ask for it because of these 'negative' side-effects of requiring students to rewrite sizeable chunks of text, or indeed entire assignments. It is therefore ironic that the increased sensitivity to the human factor in language teaching may unwittingly be preventing student writers from acquiring the necessary skills for holistic revision, only perpetuating what Sommers (1980) calls the "inability to see revision as a process".

## 1.7. Pen-and-Paper vs. Word Processor

However much one wishes to centre a course around the writing process, the conventional pen-and-paper, or even typewriter, medium obliges the writer to engage in complete re-writing, with all the issues of redundancy and demotivation that entails. The **word-processor**, on the other hand, offers teachers of writing the opportunity to focus student energy on creative writing at all times.

It is in the light of our overall diagnosis of problems with 'pen-pushing' writing courses that the move to computer-assisted revision appears to be such a promising alternative and potential solution to a problem which, though apparently largely logistical, is at root one of conception. Are teachers, in their desire to effect improved writing competence, emphasizing the process or the product? The conventional approach, pen-and-paper or typed re-write, with all the accompanying drawbacks we have already mentioned, seems to us to impede both a process approach to writing improvement and a holistic view of text revision. On the basis of evidence presented by other researchers (Daiute, 1985; Phillips, 1986, Higgins & Johns, 1984) we hypothesized that using the Word Processor as a writing tool might encourage or enhance a process approach to writing instruction.

We therefore undertook a pilot comparative study, with 2 groups of 1st-year Engineering students at Hong Kong University, to explore to what extent the computer is, as Daiute describes it, "...the perfect writing tool for a process approach to writing".

## Part 2 : THE STUDY

### 2.1. Introduction

Information was sought on 3 fronts: students' **attitudes** to each medium, their **performance**, and the **processes** they use in revising by each method.

#### a) Experimental Hypotheses

Our **experimental hypotheses** were that the use of a word processor has an effect on:

A. writing performance

B. student attitudes to writing and revising, and

C. the process by which students revise their scripts

We hoped that the results of the study would also enable us to provide some initial answers to a question posed by Martin Phillips (1986), namely:

> "....to what extent (will) the ways in which we propose to exploit the computer lead to positive benefits in terms of their impact on methodology?"

#### b) Experimental Design

This study took place between September 1987 and March 1988, at the University of Hong Kong's Language Centre. A control group of 13 first-year industrial and mechanical engineering students, and an experimental group comprising 12 first-year students from the civil and electrical engineering departments, both followed the Centre's 20-hour report writing course for engineers over a 10 week period. On entry to the course both groups were found to be comparable in terms of writing skills. The division between departments (industrial/mechanical and civil/electrical) was determined by timetable restrictions. Both groups had the same instructor so that course content and methods of instruction were, as far as possible, identical. The control group (hereafter referred to as "P group" - for pen-and-paper) were taught in a conventional classroom setting, doing all their writing by hand, whereas sessions for the experimental group ("C group" - for computer) were timetabled in a computer laboratory at the University's Computer Centre, and did their writing on word processors.

In order to monitor their **performance**, students sat pre- and post- course tests. Both groups wrote these tests by hand under examination conditions. Requiring the C group to complete the test on word processors might have been more appropriate, but would not have allowed a valid comparison of the two groups' results given the unpredictability of computer networks and the need for 'clockwork' timing in exam sessions. Indications of students' **attitudes** to writing were gained from pre- and post- course questionnaires. During the course students were asked to complete a number of short written assignments and three drafts of a long report. All of these assignments were written by the C group on word-processors. The written texts were analyzed in an attempt to measure any improvements in writing performance. The questionnaires, together with further analysis of the three drafts of the long report, also provided information on the strategies students employ in the **process** of writing.

## 2.2. PERFORMANCE

### 2.2.1. Methods

a) Pre-Course Tests

All students wishing to follow an engineering course at the University must obtain a grade 'E' (the lowest Pass grade, the highest being 'A') on the Hong Kong Examination Authority's Use of English paper. This examination is designed to test general language proficiency. Since the results of the UE examination are simply given in the form of a grade on a scale of A to E, it was difficult to subject these grades to any statistical analysis.

On entering the University, all engineering students sit the Language Centre's placement test. Based on their performance on this test, the weaker 50% of students are selected for the academic report-writing course. The placement test comprises a report-writing task and a C-test. Student responses on the C-test were marked on a right/wrong basis. The writing task required students to write a report from information provided in the form of graphs, notes and tables. The scripts were given a subjective impression mark by two separate markers on a 1 to 7 scale. The results from these two tests were subjected to statistical analysis using a simple t-test and a Mann-Whitney *U*-test to ascertain whether there was any measurable difference between the groups before the course began.

b) End-of Course Projects

Towards the end of the course all students worked on a problem-solving project during which they had to devise a scheme fulfilling the electrical energy requirements of a small fictitious island. Students worked in groups at the pre-writing stage, discussing options, doing calculations and making oral presentations to the rest of the class. Each group was asked to work as a team to come up with a plausible solution, but students then wrote reports outlining the scheme and justifying their arguments on their own.

After writing the first draft of this report, the students received comments on the rhetorical features of their texts, as well as on the content. After a feedback session looking at common problems arising from the drafts, students were asked to rewrite the reports. This second draft was marked for spelling, lexical, stylistic and grammatical appropriateness, and students were asked to edit it to produce the third and final draft to be handed in for assessment. It was at this stage that the texts were graded. All of them were later typed on a computer (the different impressions made on the reader by handwriting/printout being an unwanted variable) and graded by two experienced markers who had taught the course but who did not know the students. A marking scheme was used which was designed to assess general writing proficiency and grades were again awarded on a 1 to 7 scale, according to success in meeting the rhetorical objectives of the course.

c) Post-Course Achievement Test

After completing the course all students sat an achievement test, designed to be a parallel test to the writing task on the placement test. The scripts were marked in the same way as in the placement test using the same two markers and a 1 to 7 scale. The markers were again asked to focus specifically on the rhetorical and linguistic skills taught on the course. Again, the results were subjected to statistical analysis, using a t-test and the Mann-Whitney *U*-test.

2.2.2. Results (See Appendix 1)

The P group scored somewhat better than the C group in the UE examination. A Mann-Whitney *U*-test (used because of a large variation in SD's between groups) also revealed that the P group scored significantly higher ($p<.05$) on the C-Test. These two results together suggest that the P group were more competent than the C group with regard to general language proficiency. On the pre-course writing task we also used a Mann-Whitney *U*-test, again because of the large difference in SD's between the two groups. This time the analysis revealed no significant differences. It was therefore concluded that although the two groups differed in terms of general language proficiency, they were comparable in terms of writing ability when the course started.

The Grades from the long projects (written by the C group on word-processors) showed much closer SD's between groups using both marking schemes. This time, we did both a t-test and a Mann-Whitney *U*-test on the data. Neither test revealed any significant difference between the two groups in either of the assessments. The results of the post-course test, written by hand by both groups, showed that the C group performed significantly better than the P group both when compared using the t-test ($p<.02$) and the Mann-Whitney *U*-test ($P<.05$).

2.2.3. Discussion

Since the duration of the course was so short (only 10 weeks) and the hours of instruction so few (20), we did not expect that writing on the computer in itself would produce any immediate and direct effects on writing quality. We were somewhat surprised, then, to see that the C group appeared to show significantly greater improvement than the P group on the post-course test. However, a further analysis of the data suggests that another variable, not the use of the computer, might account for the difference. The C-group SD's in the pre-course tests were much higher than for the P group, signifying a greater range of ability within the C group and more students at the lower end of the ability spectrum. We would consequently expect these students, who have greater room for improvement, to push up the mean for the group as a whole on the post-course test. We would not expect the mean of the P group to alter dramatically, since the range of ability within the group seems to be much smaller. This 'catch-up effect' seems to provide the most convincing explanation, especially since the post-course test was written by hand by both groups. When marked for general writing proficiency, the projects, which the C group wrote on word processors, again showed the C group had a higher mean score, although the difference was not significant.

These results seem to confirm what our basic teaching intuitions told us, and what writers like Pierson & Leung (1987), Foulds (1987), Daiute (1985) have found - namely, that computers do not in themselves produce good writing, at least not to a degree that we could confidently measure after so short a course. More interest is now being directed towards the effect they have on attitude and the writing process. However, if the computer's influence on *these* factors is sufficiently positive, then there is the possibility that we can still expect improved writing quality from students in the long run. The 'catch-up effect' noted in the post-test results could well be due, at least in part, to the positive effect the word-processor has on student attitudes.

## 2.3. ATTITUDE

### 2.3.1. Methods

Before the course began, both groups were asked to complete a **pre-course questionnaire** which was designed to determine

a) what strategies engineering students think they employ when in the process of writing, and

b) what their attitudes are towards writing.

At the end of the course, students were asked to fill in a **post-course questionnaire** in order to find out how students thought

a) they had written their assignments during the course, and

b) they would write assignments in future.

A staff-student **consultation meeting** was held when the course had finished; all engineering groups on the writing course, including our control and experimental groups, were represented by elected students. The purpose of the meeting was to get direct feedback from students with a view to evaluating the course and revising it for future classes. We were also particularly interested in hearing students' comments on writing on the word-processor.

### 2.3.2. Results

a) The Pre-Course Questionnaire

There were no significant differences between the two groups with regard to attitudes towards the writing process. In the pre-writing stage the responses varied a great deal from individual to individual, though few students (25%) in either group said that they write detailed plans. When writing their assignments, students from both groups stated that they spend time thinking what they are going to say before writing so that they do not have to rewrite afterwards. Few students (25%) reported that they write quickly knowing they can change their work later.

However, the majority of students estimated that they do spend some time revising and editing their work, and of these, one third admitted to re-copying it. When asked to indicate how important they thought it was to revise their own work, nearly all students thought it important or essential. However, they saw it as more important, on the whole, to revise before receiving a teacher's comments than after.

b) The Post-Course Questionnaire (See Appendix 2)

Responses to this questionnaire revealed that there were very few differences between the two groups as regards pre-writing, writing or revision strategies. Slightly more students in the P group said they wrote detailed plans before writing and that they would continue to do so in future. More students in the P group said they spent time thinking before writing their assignments, even though they knew they could change their texts later. 4 students (33%) in the C group said they spent *quite a lot/a great deal* of time revising the structure of whole paragraphs, compared with only 1 student (7%) in the P group.

There seemed to be no major differences between the groups in terms of ease *and enjoyment* totals. However, when we look at the break-down of these totals, we see that the C group found writing assignments both easier and more enjoyable, while revising was easier though slightly less enjoyable. It is at the editing stage, however, that the C group's responses were most negative.

The most striking difference between the groups was in how *effective* they felt their writing of the assignments was. 7 of the computer students (58%) felt their writing to be *quite effective/very effective*, whereas 12 of the P group (92%) felt it was *okay/not very effective*. The C group seemed to feel more positive about the effectiveness of the course in improving their ability to write assignments. If not required by their tutors to revise or edit their work, slightly more students in the C group thought they would revise organization anyway, while slightly more of the P group thought they would edit for grammar, spelling and vocabulary.

The final question on the post-course questionnaire asked the open question, "*Do you think the course has changed the way in which you write your assignments? If so, in what way?*" Almost all students (22/88%) felt the course had changed the way they wrote assignments. The P group concentrated their comments on the content of the course, feeling that it had improved their organization, revision skills etc. The C group wrote much longer comments, stressing the value of the computer as a writing tool. Of the 11 students who wrote something, 5 (45%) mentioned that the computer made revising, editing and rewriting easier. 5 also felt a computer printout improved the appearance of their work; as one student put it, "*Usually my assignments are not tidy, but now by using the computer, it gives me the impression that my work is tidy* and *easier to be read.*" 4 students (36%) felt that it took them longer to write assignments on computers because they did not know how to type. Of these, 2 (18%) qualified this by saying that the time spent was worth it since the appearance of their work was improved.

c) Staff-student consultation meeting

This was attended by five students representing the six engineering writing classes. The C group representative said that his group liked writing and revising on computers, whereas the P group's representative said although his group felt revising was useful, they did not enjoy it. There was some discussion on the possible use of the computer to write assignments in future during which several students said they would like to be given the choice between writing on computers or by hand. 3 representatives went on to say that if given the choice they would still prefer to write by hand. Inability to type and slow typing speeds were cited as the reasons for the reluctance to use computers.

### 2.3.3. Discussion

a) The Pre-Course Questionnaire

Our main aim in giving this questionnaire to students before the course began was to gain some insight into the way students ordinarily tend to write assignments; we felt this would, at least to some extent, offer a reflection on what they had previously been taught.

It appears that the majority of students think a lot before writing, and very few write quickly with the intention of changing the draft afterwards. This could be due to the notion, gained through years of experience in secondary schools, that any draft handed in to the teacher is the final

product. Students tend to have a sense of 'completeness' when they produce their first draft, and there is little notion of writing being a process. This is a notion that is difficult to 'un-learn'.

Another result which seems to indicate an emphasis on the final product, is that while nearly all students felt it was *important/essential* to revise/edit their work, most thought it important to do this before receiving a teacher's comments. They are obviously unused to getting work back with comments which they are routinely expected to act upon. The sense of failure and punishment attached to a request to rewrite a text seems quite understandable in the light of these comments, since rewrites are not associated with the 'normal' writing process.

b) The Post-Course Questionnaire

It appears from these results that although there was no major difference in responses between the groups after the ten weeks, there was a move towards a more flexible approach by the C group, in the sense that they now had ease of revision in mind before they started writing. Both groups were told before writing that they could change/revise their work later, and the P group were told they need not rewrite the entire text but could "cut and paste" to facilitate the production of a revised draft. Nevertheless, the P group spent longer thinking before writing than the C group. This could well be because, even with the cut and paste facility, revision with pen-and-paper is still much more time-consuming and burdensome than with the word processor.

The fact that more students in the C group said they spent *quite a lot/a lot* of time revising the structure of whole paragraphs appears to have two possible explanations. Firstly, it may be that the C group simply took longer to accomplish the same type of revisions as the P group. This, however, seems unlikely. Even given that the P group could cut out sentences and re-arrange them, it is hard to believe that this is a faster method than using a computer to move text around on the screen. A more likely explanation seems to be that the ease with which the C group could manipulate paragraph structure meant they spent more time considering this aspect of their text revision.

Several factors might account for why editing seemed to be easier for the P group. Firstly, several of the C-group students were totally unfamiliar with word-processing on computers. Secondly, those students who were familiar with word-processing were nevertheless unfamiliar with the software program the University employs (PC-Write). Thirdly, poor typing skills were cited by 2 (18%) students[4] as the reason why they found working on the word-processor took longer - even for adding, deleting, substituting short phrases, single words or letters. These initial difficulties with computers are common to most beginners. Almost all who regularly use computers, however, see the difficulties with the mechanics of typing and so on as short-lived. At 20 hours, only half of which was actually spent on the word processor, the course did not allow students time to develop familiarity with the medium. We would hypothesize, therefore, that both ease and enjoyment would be enhanced as familiarity with the medium increases.

Nevertheless, these initial difficulties do pose a problem in comparing writers using a totally familiar medium with others using one which is quite unfamiliar. Daiute (1985) discusses this issue at some length, commenting that nearly all studies are carried out when students are at this initial experimental stage. The interesting thing with our results is that the C group found revision easier, while the P group found editing easier. We do not know if the picture would remain the same if we administered another questionnaire after the students had been using the computers for several months. Our own experience tells us that after learning how to use spelling checkers, thesauruses, search-and-replace facilities, and how to move quickly around long texts using 'macro' commands (several complex commands condensed into one or two keystrokes), the computer users would also find editing easier on the computer. Nevertheless, as tertiary level writing teachers, we find this shift in emphasis away from surface level changes and on to macrostructural changes a welcome result of introducing the computer into writing classes,

remedying an area of neglect in our students' previous writing instruction.

One other problem we encountered was in interpreting student responses in the "effectiveness" sections (see Appendix 2). In retrospect, we saw that while the wording of questions 18-20 seems to be fairly explicit, there may have been some ambiguity as to the precise meanings of questions 15-17. Did students, for example, interpret "effective" as meaning that their end-products fulfilled the course goals effectively? Or that the computer was more effective as a writing instrument? We do not know the answer to this and are therefore reluctant to draw any conclusions from these responses.

Responses to questions 18 and 19 appear to be the most intriguing and perhaps also the most significant. The C group seemed to think the course was more effective than the P group did. The fact that more students in the C group thought the course effective in improving the organization of their work, as well as being a result of previously mentioned factors, could also have to do with non-productive labour. Because we asked students to produce at least two (and in the case of the final project, three) drafts of their assignments, this factor may be an important one. When students work on the word-processor, all their interventions produce meaningful results; that is, they simply <u>revise</u> text, and need not rewrite. When writing using pen-and-paper, the student faces a dilemma: either he rewrites the whole, or a large portion, of his text, which will involve extensive copying, or else he decides to avoid this even if he sees certain limitations in the organization of the information as it stands. If he rewrites, he can hardly see the activity as "effective". If he chooses not to, there may be a sense of frustration at leaving it in an unsatisfactory state. Perhaps it is this sense of frustration at being limited in what they can revise that influenced the notion of effectiveness for the P group. We discuss this idea further in section 3.2.

## 2.4. PROCESS

### 2.4.1. <u>Methods</u>

The three drafts of the long project were analyzed, using Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy of revision changes as a basis. Since our main concern was whether there were any differences between the two groups in the way they revised (as opposed to edited) their texts, we confined ourselves to what Faigley and Witte call "Meaning" changes and ignored "Surface" changes (see 2.4.3a). All meaning changes were recorded using their Addition, Deletion, Substitution, etc. table, both at the micro and macro structural levels[5]. In addition, we also recorded the number of interventions each student made. Interventions are defined here as the actual number of changes, as opposed to the number of sentence units which were changed. Therefore a major deletion of say, 6 sentences, would be recorded as 6 in the Faigley and Witte taxonomy, but as only <u>one</u> intervention. This would enable us to look not only at the total number of sentence units that were changed but also at their distributions within the texts.

To make the analysis easier, the different strategies were colour-coded, using highlight pens. Since little evidence was found of Faigley & Witte's 'Consolidation' or 'Distribution' strategies, we only marked Addition, Deletion, Substitution and Permutation changes, although Consolidation and Distribution strategies <u>were</u> looked for.

Time did not allow us to examine the texts of all 25 students, so we chose to look at 6 student projects from each group. Students were ranked according to the grades given to them in the assessment and every alternate student in the rank order was chosen, giving a range of students from the most to the least proficient in each group.

2.4.2. Results (See Appendices 3a & 3b)

By far the most frequently made type of revision was Addition, both at the micro-(a total of 50) and at the macro-(95) structural levels. After that came Substitution (45), Deletion (30) and Permutation (29). We found very few Distributions (only 1, at the micro level) and no Consolidations.

There was a great deal of variation both within groups and between the two groups in terms of the number of revisions made. Within the P group the total number of revisions ranged from 10 to 26, and within the C group from 3 to 48. Both groups combined made more macro-(153) than micro-(98) structural revisions.

The C group made more revisions than the P group both at the micro- (55 compared with 43) and at the macro- structural levels (87 compared with 66). In total, the C group made 142 meaning revisions, while the P group made 109. The most significant macrostructural differences were found in additions, with 62 changes by the C group against 33 by the P group, substitutions, the P-group numbering 24 of these against 4 for the C group, and permutation, with 13 changes by the C group against 4 by the P-group.

The C group intervened more frequently in their texts (91 times compared with 65 times for the P group). It was also noted that the C group revisions spanned the entire text more frequently, while the P group were more inclined to limit extensive revisions to one section or chunk of text, with the exception of 1 student, who re-wrote the whole paper (the teacher had instructed the P group that they need not re-write the whole report, they could "cut and paste").

2.4.3 Discussion

a) Faigley & Witte's Taxonomy

The Faigley and Witte taxonomy proved useful in revealing what students tend to do when re-writing, but in a comparison of approaches along the holistic-atomistic spectrum, we may need to look at different parameters. Their distinction between **surface** and **meaning** changes, while clear enough in itself, does not allow for an analysis of other, equally important factors. We found some difficulty in interpreting their definitions of "Distribution" and "Consolidation" at the Macro-level, and felt that the "Permutation" category would prove more useful if defined differently.

In their paper, Faigley & Witte define 'surface changes' as those which do not affect meaning. They seem to overlook, however, the notion that surface changes can sometimes radically influence the type of attention given to a text by the reader. In our analysis of student reports, for example, students often inserted headings, sub-headings and numbering systems which dramatically altered the appearance of the text, and in some cases greatly enhanced the accessibility of the information. When categorizing such changes, we would probably label them "non-meaning change additions". This seems not to fully describe their impact on the communicativity of the text as a whole.

Some studies referred to by Alison Piper (1988), in her review of research on the subject, show that writers on word-processors become preoccupied with "surface-level" manipulations of the text, and editorial "fiddling about". One study (Harris 1985) found that even the best students made fewer "macrostructure" revisions when using the word-processor. "Inexperienced writers, those who do not typically revise, seem even less inclined to make major changes in the content and organization of their texts when they use the word-processor."

Cooperating with the reader, however, is an important part of communication and seems too vital a skill to have its manifestations dismissed as "surface" changes or "fiddling about" if it contributes to the enhancement of communication. Consideration of whether and where to make such changes requires a **holistic** operation on the text by the writer. A simple quantitative analysis, therefore, does not reflect the extent to which a "mere" surface change can alter the recipient's perception of the message - of its focus and level of assertiveness, for example. In short, while Faigley and Witte's taxonomy was invaluable in quantifying our data, we became aware of the dangers of relying too heavily upon it to determine degrees of writing competence in our students.

Another problem was that Faigley and Witte provide precise definitions of the various strategies in the context of "meaning-preserving surface changes" only, and leave the more difficult definitions of the meaning changes largely up to the reader; this is not helpful if one's concern is largely with meaning changes (see Note 5). What, for example, would be a "Consolidation" change at the macrostructural level? If we take consolidation to be a reduction of essentially the same information from, say, three sentences into one, then how would such a change affect a summary of the passage, which is what is necessary for it to qualify as a meaning change at the macro level? Certainly, we found this difficult to pin down. If the writer has summarized his information well, the original meaning will be retained. An effective consolidation change could therefore be recorded as a 'non-meaning surface change', while a poor one might be categorized as a 'macrostructural meaning change', or as a substitution, and not be recognized as consolidation at all.

Similar problems arise with Faigley and Witte's definition of **Permutation.** In applying this category to student texts we found two distinct varieties. First, some permutations were of the type where the writer re-orders the information in the same location, changing the order of information within a sentence or within neighbouring sentence units (as in Faigley & Witte's example om Note 5). This variety of permutation we might term **local permutation.**

However, often students would move a section of text to a totally new location, e.g. from a Discussion to a Results or 'Feasibility' section. In each of the interventions of this kind, the student was clearly revaluing the role and rhetorical function of the information being moved (see 2.4.3b below) and, in Faigley & Witte's terms, altering the 'meaning' of the text at the macrostructural level. This second type of permutation we might term **global permutation**, a re-location of information which shows a sophisticated rhetorical awareness, specific to the genre in question. A similar case could be made for the category of 'global distribution', but we could not identify any changes of this type in our small sample.

Certainly, more careful consideration of rhetorical purpose and genre in academic writing is needed if studies using the Faigley & Witte taxonomy are to be fruitfully compared.

b) Analysis of Revisions

The most significant differences between the types of changes made by the 2 groups between drafts were at the macrostructural level, particularly in the categories of Substitution, Addition and Permutation.

The greater number of macro-structure substitutions made by the P group seems due to a tendency to cross out or discard, and then replace an entire section of the report. The C group in the same position (given the same teacher criticism) tended to insert new propositions or chunks of text where deemed appropriate - hence the large number of Macro-structural additions.

Perhaps most interesting were the **Permutation** changes, especially those described above as 'global permutations'. Although these interventions were few in number (1 for the P group and 5 for the C group) and only occurred in 3 of the 12 scripts analyzed (1 P group and 2 C group scripts), they nevertheless amounted to a difference in actual sentence units changed of over 300% (4 for the P group and 13 for the C group), testifying to a sharpening of metadiscoursal awareness that we had not expected to find after such brief exposure to the word processor. The P group instance was a case of perceiving the redundancy of repeating in text what had been made eminently clear in a diagram. The writer retained only those propositions which drew attention to the most significant features of the scheme, placing them after the diagram.

The global permutation changes made by the 2 C group students all featured the retention and re-location of text while revealing an awareness that it had been given an inappropriate rhetorical "value". One of the 2 students realized that what he had called his 'Conclusion' was actually only adding qualification about potential drawbacks to his proposal, and so properly belonged in the section 'Recommended Scheme'. The other C group student, who had the most such interventions in his report (4), had first of all removed a rather philosophical introduction to his report, after some class discussion on the likely shared knowledge between the reporter and the targeted reader. He scaled down the frame of reference of the report, moving his 'Background to the Project' from p.3 to the opening section of the report. This writer had also begun his 'Feasibility' section outlining the purpose of the project; he proceeded to move this and create a separate 'Objective of the Report' section. Where he had included a criticism of an unsuitable form of energy in his description of the different energy sources, he proceeded to move these comments to the 'Objective of the Report' section, narrowing the scope of the report by eliminating a priori unsuitable energy sources. Finally, this writer had listed his 'criteria' for selecting energy options in his 'Recommended Scheme' section, on p.6 of his report. He moved these 'criteria' 3 pages forward to a separate section just prior to the 'Feasibility' section, realizing that one cannot discuss the feasibility of an option without knowing what criteria one is judging the options by.

In helping students to develop a sense of how well their writing fulfills its rhetorical goals, there seem to be clear advantages (over the Humanities-type essay) to working with a text format which encourages the assignment of information to the service of specific rhetorical macrofunctions (e.g. Background - Description of Energy Sources - Feasibility of Energy Sources - Recommended Scheme - Discussion - Conclusion).

Interpreting these data in terms of desirability of writing/revision strategy, we could say that the P method tends to encourage an 'all-or-nothing' approach to revision and, in the case of a report clearly segmented into sections, any 'holistic' approach would be confined to the level of a section, time and tolerance being the constraining factors. It is very difficult to insert single sentences, or small paragraphs into a larger text without adversely affecting its presentation (an important factor in reports), or opting for a total rewrite. Since they were given the possibility to make photocopies of their texts, cut them up and paste intact chunks of text onto their revised version, the P group students tended to think in terms of revising 'by section', opting to change those sections deemed least satisfactory. Where <u>most</u> of the text was acceptable, they decided to leave it alone. Conversely, where they felt unhappy with most of what they had written in a particular section, they chose to rewrite. It seemed to us that the focus was not so much on what should be **changed** but rather on what could be **retained**. Occasionally, however, a student would decide to rewrite a large section for the sake of making minor changes. In one extreme example, a student wanted to insert two sub-headings into the Introduction section of his report. He pasted a 20-line piece of paper over his old text having first recopied it exactly, except that his writing was slightly smaller to make room for his two additions. Interestingly, the 1 P group student who re-wrote his entire paper <u>still</u> produced a revision in which 50% of the text was unaltered, and therefore 50% of his time had been spent on redundant copying. One wonders how "effective" these (P group) students feel the revision stage of the writing process is in improving their work.

The process analysis ultimately throws the spotlight back on attitudinal factors like **punishment** and **re-writing apprehension**.

The C group seemed rather more willing to intervene in their texts. The relative ease with which they could add, delete or re-locate text meant they were able to focus on the overall rhetorical structure of their reports. Freed from the restrictions imposed by the need to re-write, they were more able to make a holistic appraisal of their texts. This would account for the larger number of macrostructural additions, deletions and permutations for the C group, with the "cut-and-paste or total rewrite" technique accounting for the P group's much greater number of macrostructural substitutions.

Other researchers, like Sommers, Perl, Raimes and Zamel, have told us that good writers revise more at the 'rhetorical' level. The use of the word processor, at both the primary writing and revision stage, would seem by that yardstick to be encouraging 'better' writing, with a greater awareness of the rhetorical <u>function</u> and patterns of information and of the accessibility of that information for the reader.

Finally, a word about our methodology. One might well argue that if we had <u>required</u> the P group students to rewrite the whole report they would have employed different revision strategies and would have intervened more frequently and more evenly throughout their texts, just as the C group did. This is undoubtedly true, but it also proves an important point. Our awareness of re-writing apprehension and sense of punishment made us reluctant to require this from students. These reports were approximately 3 - 7 pages long, with several diagrams. Is a teacher justified in requiring two rewrites from students, knowing that approximately half of the activity would simply be copying? We think not, and this may go a long way to explaining why so little instruction and practice is <u>really</u> given in revision strategies during writing classes.

## Part 3 : GENERAL DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Writing Quality

We have already stated in the Discussion on Performance earlier in this paper that our basic teaching instincts told us before the study began that we could not expect to see any dramatic effect on writing quality simply by introducing students to writing on the computer. Our reading of relevant literature strengthened that conviction.

> "With all our efforts there is still no hard evidence to indicate that the computer use in itself makes one a better writer" (Pierson & Leung, 1987).
>
> "It would be absurd to say that word-processing leads to good writing" (Foulds, 1987).
>
> "The few studies of writing quality have shown that writing on the computer is sometimes rated lower than writing done by the same people with traditional tools" (Daiute, 1985).

Those writers who were prepared to say that computers actually improved writing quality did not, unfortunately, do it very convincingly:

> "Word-processors ... make on-screen editing so easy that they encourage the user to try out the effect of changing or adding words, changing the order of sentences or even paragraphs, and playing around with the aesthetic effect of different layouts. As a result they *seem to be affecting the quality* as well as the quantity of what is written on them" (Higgins & Johns, 1984 - our italics).

One cannot expect the mere opportunity to "play around" with layouts and "try out the effects" of changing words around in itself to improve the quality of students' writing. Writing programmes have to be designed around pragmatic principles so that the development of rhetorical, or 'metadiscoursal', awareness in students becomes a prerequisite for any improvement in what we are calling the 'writing process'. Without such an awareness, in the words of Daiute (1985), "all the word-processing commands in the world won't help".

Not surprisingly, then, our results from the Performance section lead us to a rejection of our first experimental hypothesis. The computer did <u>not</u> directly affect writing quality, at least in the short term - which in this case means 10 weeks or 20 hours of instruction. Nevertheless, results from the Attitude and Process sections of the study tend to confirm our two other experimental hypotheses and cause us to agree with Higgins and Johns that writing on the computer <u>will</u> affect writing quality - but for quite different reasons. Despite the short time-span of the study and the fact that students were, for the most part, novices with word-processors, the computer seems to have had a positive effect on student <u>attitudes</u> to writing. This was especially evident with regard to the ease with which they felt they could write and revise and their sense of the effectiveness of a computer-based writing course. The computer certainly had an effect on the <u>process</u> the students went through in revising their work.

It is these two aspects of the results - **Attitude** and **Process** - which we believe will improve writing quality in the long-term. If the computer changes the way **students** write and their attitudes towards writing, then these factors, together witn the variety of writing aids the computer offers, will certainly affect the way **teachers** teach writing in the classroom

### 3.2. Writing, Computers ... and Students

In our discussion on 1st draft and revised drafts in the Introduction we mentioned that most students do not have time to produce a preliminary first draft, revise and edit it, and then write out a neat copy. This point seems to have been confirmed by our pre-course questionnaire. Only one third of the students said they usually wrote a neat copy when writing with pen-and-paper, but most students said that they do spend some time revising/editing their work before handing it in.

If we accept that students do do some revising, we might expect that teachers would frequently receive assignments complete with crossings out, additions in the margins, arrows indicating relocations of text and so on. But this is not the case. Students are too concerned about the appearance and presentation of their work to hand in very untidy papers, a concern arising perhaps out of previous experience of critical responses from subject teachers. We are therefore left with two possible explanations for how students prepare their first drafts using pen-and-paper. Either they simply do not change everything that they know could be improved because this makes their work too untidy, or they spend a lot of time trying to express themselves clearly the first time and so avoid rewriting. It seems, in practice, that students do a combination of both. From a writing teacher's point of view this combination seems neither effective, nor desirable. Firstly, the student should ideally be able to feel free to make whatever changes he thinks are necessary to his text without worrying about 'ruining' his draft. Secondly, no matter how much thought and time goes into planning a piece of writing, it is extremely difficult to get a sense of how the whole structure fits together as an entity while writing.

Since the physical act of writing is a linear production process, the text can evolve in ways the writer had not at first intended, as a word, phrase or sentence/proposition sparks off a new idea. This process makes it difficult to distance oneself and get a clear picture of the whole text while writing. This can only be done through rereading once the draft is complete. It seems that, by using pen-and-paper, students are missing out on this important stage in the writing process. As we have said, rewriting apprehension and the drudgery of copying seem to play a large part in dissuading students from revising their texts. We can therefore postulate that a draft handed to a tutor is often not one a student feels satisfied with, but is the best he feels he can achieve under the constraints of time and energy.

Computers change the writing process in that their various text manipulation features allow writers to jump backwards and forwards in their texts, revise and rephrase, delete and insert and at the same time provide the writer with a hard copy at any stage. Once the first draft is completed the student can read and reread, make any number of changes without the generation of non-productive labour or fear of spoiling the presentation of the text. The student no longer faces the frustrating dilemma of whether to rewrite the whole, involving meaningless copying, or leave changes which he knows should be made but wants to avoid.

Writing on the computer means the student no longer has what Daiute describes as "a physical stake in producing final products on the first try because revising and even minor editing involve recopying." The text is as permanent or transient as the writer wishes to make it with the touch of a command key. The students' concept of a first draft is therefore likely to change, since he can now produce several printouts and revise each one before arriving at a relatively satisfactory result. Unlike writing with pen-and-paper, the 'word-processed' attempt will not be handed in to the tutor, but will be seen simply as a 'completed first draft'. The student can therefore exhaust his own intuitions about what is good or bad, what needs changing or leaving alone, before requesting feedback from a tutor. In consequence, the computer, despite its apparent complexity, is in many ways a more natural writing instrument than pen-and-paper,

allowing recursive editing and revising without the 'debris' of crossings-out and erasures. In addition, the printer offers the facility of 'freezing' this process at any stage in the writing process.

When students do revise on computers, they tend to revise more. They revise more both at the macro- and the micro-structural levels, and their interventions into their texts during revisions are more widespread. These results suggest the computer encourages a more holistic approach to revision and not the minor editing at the sentence level which at this preliminary stage of the process the medium of pen-and-paper encourages (except for those diligent few who are willing to recopy). Completed word-processed drafts are therefore more likely to be satisfying for the student, since the restraining factors of time and energy play far less of a role in his writing of assignments and in the revision strategies he employs. Rather it is his own abilities as a writer which determine the quality of his first draft.

### 3.3. Writing, Computers ... and Teachers

Just as the tape recorder and the language laboratory had an important effect on language teaching methodologies in their own ways (and in their own day), so the use of the computer is certain to affect writing classes. Unlike the language laboratory, the computer is not a "hothouse plant incapable of being transplanted to the environment of the world outside," (Phillips, 1986). The ubiquitous computer is here to stay, pervading society at every level. It is therefore unthinkable that the computer will be used for science classes, humanities lessons, even in the fine arts, but not for language teaching. In other words, it is not really a question of whether language teachers should use computers or not, but rather of how best to make use of the unique attributes of the computer to improve the quality of writing instruction.

In *Revising: Intentions and Conventions*, (1982), Ellen Nold discusses research (Gluckberg, Krauss, Higgins,1975) that indicates that it is not the quantity but the quality of teachers' comments on student papers that improves writing skills. The more explicit the teacher's comments, the better the students' responses. She also emphasizes the need for teachers to move away from judging finished drafts and to facilitate students' writing and revising of various drafts of the same paper. In other words, she advocates a process-oriented approach to writing instruction. She adds,

"As the quality of instruction improves, so should the quality of student writing."

We feel this is true, but as mentioned before there has always been an awkward, yet perfectly understandable, discrepancy between the theory of teaching writing as a process and the normal practice in writing classes. From our research, the computer emerges, if not as the 'perfect writing tool' in a process-oriented approach to writing, then at least as a vast improvement on pen-and-paper or the typewriter.

For a number of reasons we feel that, in the hands of responsible teachers, the word-processor will have a positive effect on teaching methods, allowing theory and practice to be satisfactorily merged in writing sessions for the first time. Following are some of the **pedagogical implications** we can see of using word-processors in the writing classroom:

a) Apprehension: Results from the post-course questionnaire suggest the computer plays a part in reducing re-writing apprehension and lessening the sense of punishment attached to re-writes; students feel that all the revising they do is meaningful and involves no non-productive work. This means that computers will be invaluable tools in enabling teachers to shift the focus onto revision, as a consistently meaningful and relevant activity rather than on rewriting, a largely mechanical and only partially productive activity.

b) Process: This shift of focus will facilitate the teaching of writing as a process. Since students can begin writing knowing all the time that revisions are both easy and painless, teachers for their part will routinely and frequently require revisions from students. They will be able to do this for the first time without any professional qualms about the punishment and non-productive labour factors. Revising will be seen not as a punishment for a poor final product, but as a natural stage in the writing process, starting with a consideration of the rhetorical macrostructure of one's text, and gradually moving through to the lexico-grammatical editing stage.

c) Holistic Approach to Writing: Not only will teachers feel free to make comments on both rhetorical and linguistic features of student texts, but they will justifiably expect the students to act upon all of these in revising their work. This in turn will mean that students will develop the skill to see the text holistically, as an entity to be structured and restructured, and not merely as a series of sentences and paragraphs to be 'corrected'.

d) The Writing Syllabus: We predict that writing syllabuses will change. Revision sessions are more likely to become a common element in the writing syllabus than was the case with pen-and-paper. Students will not have to do time-consuming rewriting at home without recourse to a tutor to clarify annotated comments, explain guidelines and make suggestions. Instead, revision sessions will be built into the course design and students can make constant use of the valuable resource their peers and tutors offer. As computers become more commonplace, they will also hopefully be able to book time on their institution's computer facilities to carry on their revision out of class.

e) Individualization: Finally, the focal point of all writing classes for a student will be his own writing. One of the problems of group tuition is that students find it more difficult to perceive the relevance of a language point taught through someone else's work. It is not greatly motivating to have to continually abstract information about a linguistic system simply for its potential application to one's own writing.

No doubt many teachers will argue that, while it is all very well to emphasize writing and revising as a process offering individualized feedback, the teacher will be veritably swamped with student assignments to comment on. Not only one, but two or even three drafts of the same paper! Of course, there may well be more work for the teacher in that area, but the computer offers many other facilities which would reduce the wastage of teacher time. The need for tedious repetition of the same points of grammar, for example, whether written on the students' papers or explained orally in the classroom, could be largely eliminated if interactive software, featuring both grammar and rhetorical structure instruction and exercises, were accessible to students on computers while they were writing assignments. On-line thesauruses and spelling checkers would also cut down on teachers' time. The time saved on these mundane, repetitious tasks would leave teachers freer to concentrate on the procedural and pragmatic dimensions of writing and revising.

In the first chapter of Computers in Language Learning (1984), Higgins and Johns explain that their aim is not only to justify using computers, but also to discuss

> "the changes of attitude or approach that must accompany such use. The learners must be, to some extent, in tune with the medium before they can benefit from it."

There is no doubt that the same changes of attitude and approach towards the use of computers in the writing classroom are essential on the part of teachers and educators if they are to provide students with the best possible environment in which to improve their writing skills.

## NOTES

1. H. Pauwels, at the University of Antwerp (Prinsstraat 13, B-2000 Antwerpen), has used this technique with some success.

2. After the Prague School: communicative dynamism can be described as that quality, or aggregate of qualities, in a text which impels a reader through that text, and which "pushes the communication forward". (Firbas 1971: 136)

3. "Rewriting is when playwriting really gets to be fun... In baseball you only get three swings and you're out. In rewriting, you get almost as many swings as you want and you know, sooner or later, you'll hit the ball". Neil Simon, quoted in Murray (1978).

4. In response to the last, and only open, question: *"Do you think the course has changed the way in which you write your assignments ? If so, in what way ?"*

5. Faigley & Witte describe their categories most clearly in terms of 'Meaning-Preserving Surface Changes'. We quote:

   "**Additions** raise to the surface what can be inferred (*you pay two dollars = > you pay a two-dollar entrance fee*). **Deletions** do the opposite so that a reader is forced to infer what had been explicit (*several rustic looking restaurants = > several rustic restaurants*). **Substitutions** trade words or longer units that represent the same concept (*out-of-the-way spots = > out-of-the-way places*). **Permutations** involve rearrangements or rearrangements with substitutions (*springtime means to most people = > springtime, to most people, means*). **Distributions** occur when material in one segment is passed into more than one segment. A change where a writer revises what has been compressed into a single unit so that it falls into more than one unit is a distributional change (*I figured after walking so far the least it could do would be to provide a relaxing dinner since I was hungry = > I figured the least it owed me was a good meal. All that walking made me hungry.*) **Consolidations** do the opposite. Elements in two or more units are consolidated into one unit (*And there you find Hamilton's Pool. It has cool green water surrounded by 50-foot cliffs and lush vegetation. = > And there you find Hamilton's Pool: cool green water surrounded by 50-foot cliffs and lush vegetation*). As the last example suggests, consolidations are the primary revision operation in sentence-combining exercises." (Faigley & Witte 1981, p.402)

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APPENDIX 1

**PERFORMANCE**

| | UE (June '87) Pass Grades A=Highest E=Lowest | | Pre-Course C-Test (Sept '87) Max = 100 | | Pre-Course Writing Test (Sept '87) Max = 14 | | Projects (February '88) Max = 14 Markers 1 | | Markers 2 | | Post-Course Writing Test (Feb '88) Max = 14 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Grade | St No | $\bar{X}$ | SD | $\bar{X}$ | SD | $\bar{X}$ | SD | $\bar{X}$ | SD | $\bar{X}$ | SD |
| **Pen-and-Paper Group** | C<br>D<br>E | 3<br>4<br>6 | 53.5 | 2.3 | 8.3 | 0.8 | 7.9 | 1.8 | 7.6 | 1.3 | 7.8 | 1.5 |
| **Computer Group** | C<br>D<br>E | 1<br>3<br>7 | 51.2 | 8.0 | 8.6 | 2.0 | 8.5 | 1.1 | 7.4 | 1.3 | 9.4 | 1.3 |
| **Significance** | P+P Group slightly better? | | p<0.05 (MW) | | None | | None | | None | | p<0.02 (t)<br>p<0.05 (MW) | |

APPENDIX 2

## ATTITUDE

**Group Averages for Questions 15 - 20 on Post-Course Questionnaire**
(Administered February 1988)

**SCALE KEY**

| 1 | 3 | 5 |
|---|---|---|
| Very Enjoyable | - | Very Boring |
| Very Easy | - | Very Difficult |
| Very Effective | - | Useless |

| | ENJOYMENT | | EASE | | EFFECTIVENESS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How did you find:** | P+P | Com | P+P | Com | P+P | Com |
| 15 writing your assignments? | 2.8 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 2.4 |
| 16 revising the organization of your work? | 3.1 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| 17 editing the grammar, spelling, vocabulary? | 3.3 | 3.6 | 2:7 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.9 |
| **TOTALS** | **9.2** | **9.4** | **8.4** | **8.1** | **8.9** | **8.3** |

| | EFFECTIVENESS | |
|---|---|---|
| **How effective do you think the writing course has been in improving your ability to:** | P+P | Com |
| 18 write your assignments? | 2.6 | 2.1 |
| 19 revise the organization of your work? | 2.9 | 2.5 |
| 20 edit for grammar, spelling, vocabulary etc? | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| **TOTALS** | **8.7** | **7.8** |

APPENDIX 3A

PROCESS

Number of Revision Changes made by each Student in each Category for Long Project (Drafts 1 to 2)

PEN-AND-PAPER GROUP: Most Proficient <————> Least Proficient

COMPUTER GROUP: Most Proficient <————> Least Proficient

| | STRUCTURE CHANGES | A5 | A10 | A4 | A8 | A1 | A11 | TOTAL | B5 | B1 | B12 | B11 | B10 | B7 | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MICRO | Addition | 1 | 5 | 6 | | | 9 | 21 | | 5 | 6 | 12 | 6 | | 29 |
| | Deletion | | 5 | | 4 | 2 | 1 | 12 | 2 | | | 2 | 1 | | 5 |
| | Substitution | | 6 | | 1 | | | 7 | 3 | 3 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 11 |
| | Permutation | | 2 | | | | 1 | 3 | | 6 | | 2 | 1 | | 9 |
| | Distribution | | | | | | | - | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| | Consolidation | | | | | | | - | | | | | | | - |
| | SUB-TOTAL | 1 | 18 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 43 | 6 | 14 | 6 | 17 | 9 | 3 | 55 |
| MACRO | Addition | 9 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 33 | 7 | 4 | 21 | 13 | 17 | | 62 |
| | Deletion | | | | | | 4 | 4 | | | 3 | 6 | | | 9 |
| | Substitution | | 5 | 6 | | 11 | 3 | 25 | | | | 3 | | | 3 |
| | Permutation | | | | 4 | | | 4 | | | | 9 | 4 | | 13 |
| | Distribution | | | | | | | - | | | | | | | - |
| | Consolidation | | | | | | | - | | | | | | | - |
| | SUB-TOTAL | 9 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 16 | 12 | 66 | 7 | 4 | 24 | 31 | 21 | - | 87 |
| | TOTAL MICRO/MACRO CHANGES FOR EACH GROUP | | | | | | | 109 | | | | | | | 142 |



30 37

APPENDIX 3B

Total Revision Changes in Second Drafts for the Computer and Pen-and-Paper Groups

| | | Pen-and-Paper Group | Computer Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| **MEANING CHANGES** | | | |
| **A** | **MICROSTRUCTURE Changes** | | |
| 1 | Additions | 21 | 29 |
| 2 | Deletions | 12 | 5 |
| 3 | Substitutions | 7 | 11 |
| 4 | Permutations | 3 | 9 |
| 5 | Distributions | - | 1 |
| 6 | Consolidations | - | - |
| **B** | **MACROSTRUCTURE Changes** | | |
| 1 | Additions | 33 | 62 |
| 2 | Deletions | 4 | 9 |
| 3 | Substitutions | 25 | 3 |
| 4 | Permutations | 4 | 13 |
| 5 | Distributions | - | - |
| 6 | Consolidations | - | - |

Total Number of Combined Revision Changes and Total Interventions in Second Drafts for Computer and Pen-and-Paper Groups

| | | Pen-and-Paper Group | Computer Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | **MICROSTRUCTURE Changes** | 43 | 55 |
| **B** | **MACROSTRUCTURE Changes** | 66 | 87 |
| **C** | **TOTAL Changes (Sentence units)** | 109 | 142 |
| **D** | **TOTAL INTERVENTIONS** | 65 | 91 |

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# SENTENCE SEQUENCE AND COHERENCE: IN SEARCH OF READERS' PROBLEMS IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with two broad issues: the relations between sentence sequence and 'coherence' in written academic discourse, and the identification of likely areas of difficulty for readers. It discusses two approaches to the diagnosis of 'coherence' problems through experimental manipulation of sentence orders in paragraphs or extended text. One of these approaches, involving reconstruction of sentence order by readers, appears promising for further studies of response to discourse. Although extrapolation to normal reading and to writing cannot be taken for granted, relations between predicted reading difficulties and writing problems can also reasonably be anticipated.

## Introduction

This paper is concerned with possible identification, through experimental studies, of problems non-native users of English have in achieving 'coherence' in the comprehension and production of written discourse. I shall briefly describe and evaluate two procedures that have been used in a number of studies, including my own research with second-language users of English in Botswana. (Some of the other studies have involved native speakers, and languages other than English). The discussion will focus on reading problems, some of which may admittedly be induced by the nature of the experimental tasks. I believe none the less that one of the approaches to be described, involving reconstruction of sentence order, can prove useful in determining difficulties that actually arise in organising statements and ideas to form coherent discourse and that this will have implications for writing as well as reading with understanding.

The relationship between sentence sequence and coherence has been widely discussed, but I shall confine myself here to two contexts. Hoey (1983, chapter one) has demonstrated that sequential links between sentences are relevant to coherence, but also that coherence involves more than ties between adjacent sentences. He presents a simple technique (devised by E.O. Winter) that can reveal readers' awareness of sequential constraints upon discourse organisation. The readers are presented with sentences in scrambled order and are asked to reconstruct the original text. Typical outcomes of this procedure are claimed to constitute evidence of readers' "instinctive knowledge of discourses" (Hoey, 1983:5). To whatever extent such knowledge may be either "instinctive" or learned, its existence appears to be demonstrated in the completion of the activity. Interestingly, in principle, any gaps in such knowledge might also be revealed, for particular learners or kinds of learner. We shall return to this possibility presently.

Another approach to the importance of sentence order for discourse coherence arises from empirical studies by Oller and co-workers into effects of changes in sentence order upon cloze test performance (i.e. on ability to supply missing words in a text from linguistic context. See Chihara et al, 1977; Chavez-Oller et al, 1985). These researchers have shown that cloze scores can be significantly reduced when original sentence order is replaced by a scrambled sentence order, particularly for narrative texts. This has implications for what cloze tests measure, indicating that the tests are not sentence-bound (despite Alderson 1979), and also for possible differences in types of text (which we will discuss shortly). Item analyses of cloze tests under the two conditions (original and scrambled sentence order) have been proposed by Chavez-Oller et al as a means of identifying constraints across sentence boundaries that affect cloze responses and may affect discourse comprehension.

Studies that I undertook at the University of Botswana, between 1982 and 1985, and that were subsequently incorporated in my thesis, included work along both these lines of enquiry into reader responses to sentences and discourse coherence. The subjects in the research were students on the Pre-Entry Science Course, a seven-month preparatory course that the university runs for intending degree and diploma students in science and science education.

Each line of enquiry can therefore be evaluated on a basis of experience (which is not to claim the last word). I shall first comment on the approach using cloze tests, and on some assertions about discourse types that have arisen from work in this field. We shall then return to the reconstruction of sentence order, and look at some findings that throw light both on the sequential nature of discourse and on possible problems for readers.

## Cloze Tests and Discourse Sequentiality

I shall not attempt here to review in detail the literature on cloze tests, or even that on cloze as a measure of constraints across sentences[1]. In brief, and at the risk of simplification, the following points will be helpful:

1. The findings of Chihara et al (1977) have shown that cloze performance can be affected by constraints across sentences. However, this does not necessarily support claims that cloze is related to "the overall comprehension of a text" (Oller, 1979:346). A modified statement of Alderson's reductionist view of what cloze is measuring (namely, an awareness of local, lexicogrammatical constraints) may well remain tenable.

2. Studies by Shanahan et al (1982) failed to replicate the Chihara et al findings, whereas other studies have succeeded in doing so (Cziko, 1978; Allison, 1986). Chavez-Oller et al (1985), citing Cziko (1983), suggest that one reason for the Shanahan et al findings may have been their choice of 'encyclopedic' descriptive texts, in which information is listed rather than integrated. In a personal communication (1986), Oller, citing Dewey, contrasts narrative and descriptive varieties of text, "the former being highly sequential in its structure and the latter somewhat unstructured". Although his remarks are impressionistic, these are important claims about the nature and variety of sequential coherence in discourses.

There are, however, other views of the nature of (varieties of) descriptive text, involving notions of what van Dijk (1977: 97-98) terms "normal ordering", that also call for attention[2]. One area that will be of particular interest to us concerns the sequence of examples following a general statement.

3. My own work at the University of Botswana successfully extended the Chihara et al findings to two instances of expository text (instructional scientific discourse). However, in further tests, the scrambling of sentence order within individual paragraphs (and that of paragraph order in

longer extracts) was not followed by any noteworthy differences in cloze performance. My conclusion in the thesis was that observed sensitivity of cloze procedure to constraints across sentences reflected more upon aspects of local lexical texture (as well as sentence grammar) than upon overall comprehension of a text. However, it was also possible that the texts I had used lacked sequential coherence for sentences within paragraphs, so that changes made locally in sentence order would not reduce comprehensibility in these instances.

## Reader Reconstruction of Sentence Orders

Thus far, my research had proved more revealing with regard to the nature and limitations of cloze procedure, as a possible measure of discourse constraints, than to problems of readers of academic discourse. Another approach to coherence through questions of sentence ordering was attempted, by giving readers the task of reconstructing paragraphs from sentences in scrambled order. The results were of sufficient interest to suggest that the line of enquiry could usefully be pursued further, and also to challenge the view that descriptive paragraphs are (perceived as) sequentially unstructured.

Many language teachers will be familiar with "split story" techniques, in which members of a group are each given a sentence from a story (or news event, etc.) to memorise, after which the group members work together to establish their story. Experience with such activities in English and Study Skills classes at the University of Botswana informally indicated that outcomes sometimes diverged considerably from an original passage, and that students were not convinced by their resolutions of the task. While this could reflect on choice of text, or on the need to achieve group consensus, it provided reason to assume that a sentence unscrambling task given to individual students might prove quite demanding. The high degree of consensus that Hoey reports on such a task with students in the U. K. (presumed to be mainly native speakers of English) would not necessarily be forthcoming in the Botswana context.

The difficulty of a reconstruction task will obviously also vary according to the nature of the connectives used in a text. For example, a list of points introduced by "First", "Second", "Third", and so on, will be unlikely to pose sequencing problems, or to reveal anything of interest. The value of such an exercise will thus depend both upon the relations in a text that need to be understood, and on the nature of the linguistic signalling of these relations. It should not necessarily be assumed, incidentally, that explicit signals of discourse relations will be attended to by readers.

## Aims of Study

A study was undertaken to determine how far subjects would be able to reconstitute the original sentence orders for each of six paragraphs from a science textbook (Smith and Cooper, 1979: 197-8). A related question was whether "other" responses would be highly divergent or whether they would converge on a limited number of the possible sequences. An interpretative issue was whether explanations could be advanced for the choices made. The passage chosen had been used, with other students, in some of the cloze studies mentioned earlier, and is reproduced as an appendix to this paper.

In the analysis of findings, particular attention was paid to discourse relations of interest for the research that were present in the text. These were relations of "contrast", "levels of generality" (also including cases in which examples at the same "level" were presented), and "given-new" relations. Other studies (perhaps in different areas of academic writing) could clearly use this procedure for eliciting responses either to these or to other relations.

Procedure

The study was carried out with 49 subjects (37 male, 12 female) at the University of Botswana. None were first-language speakers of English. These subjects had joined the course as "late entries", following improved O-level results for the country in 1984; they were consequently not a representative sample of the Pre-Entry Science Course intake, and might tend to experience greater comprehension difficulties. (Approximately 65% of these late entry subjects were later recommended for diploma courses and 20% for the degree programme).

The sentences of each paragraphs from the chosen extract had been placed in a scrambled order. (The paragraphs themselves were also placed in a scrambled sequence, which need not concern us here). The relevant task instruction was:

> "In each paragraph below, the sentences (a), (b), etc.have been listed in random order. Can you put them in the right order for the paragraph?"

Answers were written with just the letters denoting the sentences being recorded, and other tasks then followed.

The number of possible sentence orders varied from two, for a paragraph with two sentences, to 720 for a paragraph with six sentences[3]. Obviously, any attempt, in studies such as this, to compare 'number of errors' across paragraphs or texts will have to take account of the different numbers of possible sentence combinations[4].

Results and Discussion

Substantial convergence of responses was found. Choices usually included the original sentence sequence for a paragraph, and a limited number of possible alternatives together with some sequences that I judged to be unacceptable. A full report appears in my thesis. A brief summary of findings and implications now follows.

Problems were found in recognition of contrast relations, with failure in this respect sometimes leading to serious misrepresentations of the original meanings. An example was the placement, by some subjects, of a sentence beginning "This latter energy is the internal energy ..." in a position such that "This" referred anaphorically to external kinetic energy. Other anomalies often concerned the given-new status of information. For example, subjects might arrange sentences in such a way that a term being introduced in a 'nominal definition' had already been in use in their reconstruction of the paragraph.

In contrast to these difficulties, very few problems were found with levels of generality (which are quite often taken as teaching points in courses on academic reading: see, e.g. Discovering Discourse, British Council, 1980, Unit 2). General statements were regularly placed in initial position or occasionally in final position, despite absence of overt connectives to distinguish generalisation from examples. This is not to say that reading problems with levels of generality will not occur, but that their prevalence ought not to be assumed without evidence. The subjects in question had received very little instruction on levels of generality since joining the course.

Interestingly, statements at the same "level of generality", which might have been interpreted by analysts as a listing of examples in arbitrary orders, also proved to have significantly preferred orders. For example, three sentences on behaviour of atoms in substances in different states had a strongly preferred order (solid - liquid - gas), despite the absence of sequence markers; this probably reflects conventional practice. A more surprising example concerned three instances of

work performed against friction (a hammer striking a nail, a chisel ground on an emery wheel, a car tyre on a road surface). Here again, the distribution of responses differed significantly from chance (with amounts of detail and familiarity of content being possible influences). Thus, claims regarding absence of sequentiality in "encyclopedic" descriptive texts (c.f. Cziko, 1983) cannot be taken on trust, as far as reader response is concerned, but would need to be supported by empirical study if they were to be convincing.

## Conclusion

As I have suggested, any extrapolation from such studies to actual language use requires caution. In real reading situations, readers follow discourse that has been presented in original sequence. (The extent to which the sequence is essential to the coherence of the discourse may vary according to the text and text type: this question remains open). When writing, a student does not have ready-made sentences to place in an appropriate order. None the less, the paragraph reconstruction technique appears to be a useful research tool for examining the likely incidence of difficulties for particular discourse relations, and under particular conditions of linguistic signalling. A better awareness of our students' difficulties, and of those areas that do not in fact cause severe problems, is clearly a vital element in the planning and implementation of effective language and study support courses.

## NOTES

1. See Allison (1986, chapter three) for a fuller review.

2. "Normal ordering", for van Dijk, is a theoretical construct and not an empirical claim about frequency of exponence. None the less, the construct reinforces the view that descriptions, whether of state or process, potentially have structure (however this may be realised in texts): this hardly requires further support here. However, some descriptive writing may still involve lists for which the sequence of items is apparently arbitrary.

3. This figure of 720 sometimes surprises non-statisticians. The number of possible sequences of six sentences is (6 x 5 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 1).

4. For possible error criteria, see Hoey (1983:4). Although Hoey's criteria are insufficient to ensure coherence, responses that violate the criteria will often reveal difficulties in understanding and organisation of statements and ideas

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# APPENDIX

Paragraphs used in the reconstruction study are shown below in their original order. The extract, from Smith and Cooper (1979), is part of a longer section on 'Heat and Internal Energy' and is not fully self-contained. Paragraph numbers are added for ease of reference. A synopsis follows the extract.

I. The basic particles of all matter are in constant motion. Atoms in solids vibrate back and forth in complex motions about their equilibrium positions. Molecules in a liquid wander around among the other molecules, having frequent collisions with them and thus exchanging energy. In gases molecules travel about at high speeds and have frequent elastic collisions with their neighbors. The sum of the kinetic and potential energies associated with the random motion of the atoms of a substance is the internal energy of the substance.

II. Consider a bullet flying through the air with velocity v. This bullet has a kinetic energy $1/2\ mv^2$ associated with the speed of its center of mass. In addition to the kinetic energy due to the organized, collective motion of the atoms of the bullet there is also energy associated with the random motion of the atoms relative to the center of mass. This latter energy is the internal energy; it depends on the temperature of the bullet and is independent of the external kinetic energy $1/2\ mv^2$. The internal energy is there even when the bullet is at rest. If the moving bullet strikes a block of wood, much of the external energy $1/2\ mv^2$ is converted into internal energy and the temperature of the bullet rises substantially.

III. When we heat a material, its internal energy is increased. The nature of the heating process was speculated upon and argued over for centuries before the answer began to evolve at the end of the eighteenth century. One idea which held wide support for many years was that a fluid called caloric entered a body when it was heated and leaked away as the body cooled. When measurements of the mass of a body showed no increase when the body was heated, the proponents of the caloric theory argued that the fluid was massless. As a rival of the caloric theory, there gradually evolved the modern point of view that heat is a form of energy. More specifically: heat is energy which is transferred between a substance and its surroundings or between one part of the substance and another as a result of temperature differences only.

| | |
|---|---|
| IV. | One of the decisive experiments supporting the theory that heat is a form of energy was performed by Count Rumford in 1798, where he observed that boring cannon resulted in a large increase in temperature although there was no flame or other source of caloric. When the drill was dull, the rise in temperature was exceedingly great and was related to the amount of mechanical work done in the drilling. Thus, adding energy to the cannon by doing work against friction led to the same temperature response as heating it in a furnace. |

| | |
|---|---|
| V. | When we pound a nail with a hammer, the nail becomes hot. As the hammer is stopped, the atoms in the nail are given energy which shows up in the form of increased internal energy. After the hammer has struck, the atoms vibrate with greater amplitudes about their equilibrium positions. When a chisel is ground on an emery wheel, its thermal energy and its temperature are increased. When a moving automobile is stopped, its kinetic energy is transferred to internal energy in the brake drums, tires, and road. In all such cases work is done against friction with a resulting increase in the internal energy of the bodies involved. |

| | |
|---|---|
| VI. | We can increase the internal energy of a substance either by adding heat to it or by performing work on it in such a way as to increase the random motion of the atoms. We can raise the temperature of the air in a bicycle pump either by heating the barrel of the pump in a flame or by doing work on the gas by vigorous pumping. |

## SYNOPSIS

Paragraph I. (Five sentences). Defines "internal energy". Nominal definition, preceded by description.
(Presents the constant motion of particles. Exemplifies, for the three states of a substance. Introduces "internal energy").

Paragraph II. (Six sentences). Distinguishes internal energy (presumed new) from external kinetic energy (presumed known). Comparison: contrast.
(Recalls kinetic energy of a moving object. Distinguishes this from random motion of atoms. Notes possibility of converting external into Internal energy).

Paragraph III. (Six sentences). Presents internal energy as solution to problem of nature of heat. A problem and two contrasted solutions.
(Relates heat and internal energy. Outlines historical discussion of problem of nature of heat. Contrasts two theories; shows that one has been rejected, while other is currently accepted. Gives modern definition of heat).

Paragraph IV. (Three sentences). Presents evidence for solution.
(Presents experimental evidence, against "caloric" theory and consistent with "energy" account of heat. States conclusion that temperature can be increased by doing work against friction).

Paragraph V. (Six sentences). Further exemplification of conclusion.
(Cites some familiar instances of mechanical work leading to increase in temperature. States general conclusion).

Paragraph VI. (Two sentences). Summarises conclusions.
(Indicates that one can increase internal energy in either of two ways: apply heat source; perform work against friction. Exemplifies).

(The passage goes on to consider 'temperature', in the light of the above).

The sequence of topics and paragraphs derives in part from wider development in the chapter, and from anticipated reader knowledge of the topic. The paragraph order is not the sole "logical" order that might be dictated by content. There is considerable anticipation and restatement of conclusions in the passage.

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# PLURAL MARKING IN HONG KONG ENGLISH[1]

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In Hong Kong, the domains of English are limited. It is used to a degree in business, government, the media, education, particularly tertiary education, and in the legal system. It is also an official language. However, spoken English is little used intra-ethnically, i.e. among Chinese, who make up 98 percent of the population, and instead Cantonese, the majority dialect/language, predominates (Luke and Richards, 1982; Luke, 1984).

This has consequences for Hong Kong English (HKE), the English spoken by Hong Kong residents whose background language is a Chinese dialect. HKE displays a number of features also found in other New Englishes (see Platt et al., 1984). These include lexical, phonological and morpho-syntactic features. But because HKE is little used for intra-ethnic communication, it exhibits only a certain degree of systematic variation and cannot be considered a stabilized interlanguage like Singapore English (for discussion of Singapore English as a stabilized interlanguage, see Platt & Weber, 1980:20, 1984).[2]

One area of HKE that exhibits some systematic variation and that shows some similarities to Singapore English is noun plural marking. Ho's study of Singapore English speakers revealed that they were more likely to mark for plural where the prenominal elements indicated that the noun should (prescriptively) be marked in this way (Ho, 1981). A somewhat similar pattern is seen in Hong Kong English.[3]

In this study of HKE,[4] the prenominal morphemes were grouped into three categories.[5] In some ways this was non-ideal, but a larger number of categories might have meant that too few tokens were obtained for each individual speaker (indeed, Category 3 scores for some speakers had to be ignored for this very reason). Excluded from consideration were plural reflexives, pronouns and non-regular forms. This was done in order to be able to compare plural marking with third-person singular present tense marking.

The first of the categories, which for convenience is called 'zero', included all pre-nominal modifiers which were neutral with respect to plurality or that did not indicate that the following noun should be marked for plural. This means modifiers such as adjectives, definite articles, <u>other</u>, <u>certain</u>, <u>separate</u>, <u>some other</u>, plural non-head nouns, and zero.

The second category includes all pre-nominal modifiers that indicate that the following noun should be marked for plural. Some of these were: <u>a range of</u>, <u>one of the</u>, <u>one or two of the</u>, numerals other than <u>one</u>, plural demonstratives,[6] <u>all the</u>, <u>enough</u>, <u>less</u>, <u>fewer</u>,[7] <u>more</u>, and <u>sufficient</u>. It will be realized that there were difficulties in deciding whether certain modifiers should be placed in Category 1 or 2.[8]

Careful examination of Category 2 reveals a range of modifiers, some of which only precede plural nouns and others which can precede both plural and singular nouns. For example, numerals (more than one) always precede plural nouns, whereas some other modifiers may precede singular or plural nouns, e.g.

(1) a. all the book
all the books
b. some of the book
some of the books
c. all boys
all day

There are also in this category modifiers which can precede non-count nouns (see (2)) and modifiers that contain words which, on their own, accompany only singular nouns, but in which the modifier phrase can only accompany nouns marked for plural, as in (3):

(2) a. a lot of sugar
a lot of books
b. more water
more books

(3) a. one friend
one of my friends
b. half a year
one and a half years

The third category consisted of modifiers some/any. In standard spoken English, a stress contrast indicates the difference between some, meaning 'plural indefinite number' (unstressed) [sm̩] and some, meaning 'some or other' or 'exceptional' (as in 'He is some piano player'), [sʌm] (Quirk et al., 1972:136). There is also a segmental difference. In HKE there is no stress or segmental difference, requiring one to decide from context whether the noun after some should prescriptively be marked for plural, which at times is not an easy task.

Table 1 (below) shows the results. In comparing individual percentage scores with regard to Categories (1) and (2), 5 scores in Category (2) had to be discounted because they contained fewer than 5 tokens.[9] Of those that remained, 81.3 percent (61/75) of individuals marked plural more in Category (2) environments than in Category (1) environments (Two speakers had the same scores for both categories.) 42 individual scores for Category (3) environments had to be discounted because of insufficient tokens. 52.6 percent or 20 of the 38 that remained were higher for Category (3) environments than for Category (1) environments. A comparison of Category (3) environment scores and Category (2) environment scores revealed that 73 percent (27/37) were higher for Category (3) and 2 were the same (100 percent).

Table 1 - Plural Marking by 80 HKE Speakers

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 81.3% | (61/75) | Category 2 | > | Category 1 |
| 52.6% | (20/38) | Category 3 | > | Category 1 |
| 73.0% | (27/37) | Category 2 | > | Category 3 |

Key: Category 1 - 'zero' before noun

Category 2 - 'quantifier' before noun

Category 3 - 'some' before noun

Such results, though not completely conclusive, suggest that HKE speakers tend to mark plural where there is some semantic reminder that the noun is to be marked as plural. It also seems that the stronger or more unambiguous this reminder or link is, the more likely it is that the following noun will be marked for plural. (All this runs contrary to any expectation that speakers will omit plural marking after plural indicating modifiers because of redundancy.) Although the relevant data was not analysed quantitatively, in the case of speakers with relatively high scores for plural marking, it seems that their non-standard tokens in which the preceding modifier indicated a plural noun included many tokens of the 'ambiguous' type e.g.[10]

(4) mostly a the management work, management, a supervision job, a, of park and playgrounds an all the <u>facility</u> run by the Urban Services Department...

(5) cause you know dat mos(t) <u>customer</u> are a(11) Chinese.

(6) an one of my bes(t) <u>frien(d)</u> was study in U, United States now...[11]

Where speakers marked plural less than 50 percent of the time, their 'deviations' included tokens of the type illustrated in (4), (5) and (6) but in addition they also produced tokens of the type illustrated in (7) where the prenominal modifier clearly indicates the noun should be marked for plural.

(7) two younger <u>brother</u>

Two additional factors appear to play a part in the absence of plural marking in general. The following examples indicate the first of these;

(8) many old-style <u>building</u>, old fashion <u>building</u>

(9) or dose, a, I mean, um, news poin(t)s a a, you know, <u>discussion</u> on socia(l), in problems

In (8), the noun is repeated with a slightly different adjective but without plural marking.The plural-indicating modifier in (9) is separated from the noun by more words and pauses than is usual. It may be that in these types of examples, the limits of short-term memory play a part in weakening the semantic link between the modifier and the noun, and the speaker finds it hard to remember that the noun should be marked for plural.

Phonology also appears to play some part in plural marking (or the absence of it).[12] Cantonese has no final [s] or final clusters but only final nasals and a final voiceless stop series. It is therefore not surprising to find the reduction of clusters in HKE, particularly in final position. In addition, words ending in their stem form in the voiceless alveolar fricative [s], such as boss or class, and words ending in clusters containing [s], have a tendency to be left unmarked for plural, e.g.

(10) a. many gardens and many famous place
b. many waitress and waiters

In (b) 'the principle of minimum distance to the modifier' (mentioned above), works in favour of the first rather than the second noun being marked for plural; the opposite, however, has occurred, i.e. the second and not the first noun is marked for plural.

Final clusters that include [s] tend to be unmarked for plural and they may also be reduced. Where the initial consonant in a cluster is [s], the final consonant tends to be deleted and the plural omitted, e.g. guests [gests] --> [ges]; where the second consonant is [s], the [ɪz] plural marker is not added and the cluster may also be reduced (see also the discussion below in relation to third person singular present tense), e.g.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (11) | 'telexes' | [teleksɪz] | --> | [teleks] |
| | 'taxes' | [tæksɪz] | --> | [tæs] |

One can conclude, then, that the most important factor governing plural marking seems to be the presence of an unambiguously plural-indicating modifier before the noun. Less important are the less clearly plural-indicating modifiers in pre-nominal position. Factors such as phonological environment and a larger 'distance' or 'time' between the plural-indicating modifier and the noun would tend to inhibit plural marking.

An examination of secondary material, both written and spoken, reveals a similar type of pattern. The secondary material consisted of 32 transcripts of interviews conducted by Pierson and Bond of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and 40 Matriculation-level student essays. (Pierson and Bond interviewed 32 C.U. students as part of their research on interviewee reaction to interviewer ethnicity and language of interview - see Pierson and Bond, 1981 and 1982). Tables 2 and 3 show plural marking for the C.U. interviews and the Matriculation essays respectively. (Scores are expressed as totals as individual scores would have produced too few tokens. The scores were calculated by the author of this paper). For both the C.U. interviews and the Matriculation essays, subjects as a group marked plural least, according to the criterion of standardness, for Category (1) nouns (i.e. preceded by zero). However, while scores for standard marking of plural were highest for Category (2) for the Matriculation essays, they were highest for Category (3) for the C.U. interviews.

There are also other differences between scores for the Matriculation essays and those for the C.U. interviews. Each plural-marking score was lower for the C.U. interviews than the Matriculation essays. This is somewhat surprising. Only one in ten matriculation-level students gains a university place and one might therefore expect university students to have a 'higher' standard of English, i.e. in this instance, to produce a higher proportion of standard tokens. However, factors such as the differences between written and spoken English, differences in topic, etc., may have had an effect. In written English, problems such as that of distinguishing 'this' and 'these' are eliminated (unless the writer uses the same form for both). One might be tempted to talk of greater phonological interference in speech, i.e. -/s/-/z/-/ɪz/ being more difficult to pronounce after a consonant or consonant cluster. However, reversing the pattern, C.U. interviewees marked third person singular present tense (discussed below) more than the essay writers did.

Other material examined in a non-quantitative way, such as signs, notices in shops, advertisements and menus, provides further examples of non-standard absence of plural marking. Consider (12) and (13), which both involved either no quantifier or the sort of quantifier that is less 'strong' (i.e. not of the 'three boys' type).

(12) XX Hotel
... you can enjoy all facility at a very reasonable price
(taken from a billboard advertising a hotel on an outlying island)

(13) Soup and Sandwich Special (choice of one of the above sandwich)
(from a menu)

Sometimes the logical basis for non-standard absence of plural marking is apparent. One sees signs advertising jade and cultured pearl, where the writer has perhaps left pearl unmarked for plural by analogy with jade.

(14) and (15) illustrate two forms that are always plural (in the sense that they are used here) but which are frequently treated as singular in HKE. Both oversea (c.f. overseas) and downstair (c.f. downstairs) were used by my interviewees. There is in fact a bank called "Oversea Chinese Banking Corporation". In my view the non-standard forms of these two items have largely become fossilized.

(14) We pack, mail and deliver your purchases to oversea.
(sign on a window of an antique store)

(15) Fast food downstair
(cafe sign)

Other frequently occurring non-standard forms of this type are business hour and noodle[13] (the latter appears on menus).

How much has this pattern been influenced by the background language, Chinese? As stated above, Cantonese is the main dialect of Hong Kong and the language of interdialectal communication. In both Mandarin and Cantonese, plurality or quantity is not indicated by suffixation or any change in shape of the noun.[14] Instead, a pre-nominal morpheme or a numeral (more than one) plus a classifier serves this function (both Cantonese and Mandarin make use of numeral classifiers[15]; some structures, e.g. possessives, may be indefinite as far as plurality is concerned):

Mandarin

(16) sān kuài qián
3 classifier money
'3 dollars'

(DeFrancis, 1975:32)

Cantonese

(17) leung5 ga3 che1
2 class. car
'2 cars'

(Lau, 1972:129)

Can any background language influence be seen in the pattern of plural marking in HKE? Certainly no specific influence is evident; there is no evidence of classifiers or preverbal pluralising

particles in HKE.[16] If Cantonese has influenced HKE, it has done so in a general way. Just as the pre-nominal elements, especially numerals in Cantonese, serve to indicate to the speaker that the following noun has plural reference, so the pre-nominal elements in English indicating plural serve to signal to the HKE speaker that the noun should be marked for plural. Thus only indirect influence from Cantonese can be discerned.

It is also revealing to compare plural marking with marking of third person singular present tense as the predictable allomorphs, etc. of both are phonologically identical (see note 12 for details). An attempt was made to compare these grammatical features among my own interviewees. Although some speakers marked plural more than third person singular present tense, while others marked third person singular present tense more than noun plural, the number of tokens was too small for valid individual comparison. Though the number of tokens in secondary material was not large, it is apparent in both media and, particularly, in written material, subjects marked plural more than third person singular present tense (Tables 2 and 3).

M.L. Ho's 1981 thesis on the noun phrase in Singapore English provides an interesting comparison. Although her study was more detailed (she had more categories), her speakers (who were Chinese speakers of Singapore English) also marked for plural more where the semantics of the pre-nominal elements were plural-indicating (Ho, 1981:117). She, too, found a similar pattern of third person singular present tense marking. She attributes this to the absence of a "semantic unity" as regards the latter (Ho, 1981:17), i.e. whereas there is a semantic link between plural-indicating modifiers (numerals, quantifiers) and plural marking, there is no such link between third person subjects and the agreement marker on the verb. In a smaller-scale, though more detailed study of third person singular marking by ESL students from a range of background languages, Abraham found that there was a tendency for students to mark third person singular present tense more for particular verbs and this, she suggests, is due to factors such as "frequency with which they (i.e. the verbs) are heard..., the perceptual saliency of the morpheme when it is attached to particular verbs, and the difficulty in pronouncing verbs used with the morpheme" (Abraham, 1984:67). However, while she found that <u>seem</u> was one verb least frequently marked, my interviewees seemed to mark verbs like <u>seem</u> and <u>appear</u> relatively frequently in constructions such as <u>it seems</u> and <u>it appears</u>.

This leads us to a second question, namely whether such patterns are typical only of Singapore English and HKE or whether, for example, the tendency to mark plural more when there is some sort of semantic indicator preceding the noun is a strategy used by the majority of Chinese learners of English. Chen's study of the written errors of Taiwanese students does not lend itself to empirical comparison (it provides scores only of errors), although he does note that "errors" relating to plural marking (including absence of plural marking) are the most frequent of all noun-associated errors (Chen, 1979:104). All the examples that Chen gives of absence of plural marking are of the type commonly found among my data - they include zero before noun, <u>some</u> before noun, and <u>a lot of</u> (Chen, 1979:104). However, the question of whether the same type of pattern of plural marking is found in the English of other Chinese speakers/writers awaits further research in places like China and Taiwan, as well as in English-speaking countries.

## NOTES

1. An earler version of this paper was presented at the Eleventh Australian Applied Linguistics Association Conference held at the University of Adelaide in August, 1986.

2. There are some Singaporeans who are native speakers of English but the English they acquire as children is, of course, a localized variety (J. Platt, personal communication).

3. An additional feature of HKE, though not one I have subjected to quantitative investigation, involves the re-analysis of nouns not normally marked for plural, such as non-count nouns, as in 'Underwears sold are not returnable or changeable'. Such a pattern is common in other New Englishes; indeed, Platt et al. list examples such as "staffs", "equipments", "funs", and "works" (Platt et al., 1984:51), which one also finds in HKE.

4. 80 subjects were interviewed for between 20 and 30 minutes. Subjects came from a variety of occupational backgrounds and the majority ranged in age from 20 to 35 years.

5. Types of nouns analyzed included both proper and common nouns (partly because of the problem of distinguishing the two), plural non-head nouns, and nouns which are always marked for plural but which some HKE speakers leave unmarked, e.g. oversea.

6. There was some difficulty in distinguishing these, as some HKE speakers have an invariable [dɪs] form, i.e. they fail to distinguish this and these. This may be partly the result of a loss of a voicing distinction in the final consonant and a lack of distinction between [i] and [ɪ]. Further examples of the latter include the loss of distinction in pairs, such as living and leaving and read and rid.

7. In 'prescriptive norm' I include what is common in spoken 'native' English, although it may be considered by some to be prescriptively incorrect, e.g. less classes. I believe this to be justified by the fact that, to some extent, native speakers provide a model for HKE speakers.

8. Non-standard use of prenominal modifiers was treated in the following way: tokens such as much book, dat kind of boy and dat kind of books were considered to involve Category (1) type modifiers; tokens of the type in many kind of the book were included in Category (2).

9. Where the total number of tokens in a particular category was less than five, the percentage is not given.

10. Hesitation phenomena have generally been included. As far as possible, actual pronunciation is represented in spelling.

11. This type of token is different from those in (4) and (5). While in standard English, all can be followed by a singular or plural noun and most is followed by a singular or a mass noun, one of the is always followed by a plural noun. However, the presence of one in the modifier phrase may serve to confuse these second language learners and in that sense one of the can be judged 'ambiguous'.

12. The phonological factors involved in English plural marking i.e. /-s/ after voiceless non-sibilants, /-z/ after voiced non-sibilants and /-ɪz/ after sibilants, do not appear to affect the degree of plural marking.

13. This possibly involves analogy with rice.

14. Cantonese and Mandarin share the same writing system although they are not mutually intelligible.

15. Classifiers generally identify certain features of the noun they accompany and they are found in Chinese in counted noun phrases as well as in some other constructions.

16. The only evidence in all the data of any direct influence from Cantonese classifiers was the following, taken from a breakfast menu: Boiled eggs (two pieces).

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# A READING EXPERIMENT WITH L2 READERS OF ENGLISH IN HONG KONG - EFFECTS OF THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF EXPOSITORY TEXTS ON READING COMPREHENSION

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## 1 Aim of Study

An experiment was carried out to study how the rhetorical structures of expository texts influence reading comprehension. I was interested in exploring the relationships between text organisation and reading comprehension for the following reasons:

1) The medium of instruction for the majority of Chinese students in Hong Kong is English, as are the course books and reference reading. Therefore, whether these L2 learners can learn successfully depends, to a large extent, on their ability to read and understand expository texts in English.

2) There have been some studies on the effects of rhetorical organisation on reading comprehension; however, with the exception of a few using L2 students studying in the United States, most of them were conducted on L1 students.

Before describing the experiment, I will discuss the schema-theoretic model of reading which forms the theoretic basis of the investigation.

## 2 Theories of Reading

### 2.1 Text Data

Reading is a dynamic process involving the reader and his interaction with the text. Current reading research puts more emphasis on the role the reader plays in the encounter with text than on the text as written language. Readers interact with texts to attain comprehension. However, the fact that texts have objective properties and that text is a vital component of the process seems no longer to receive the same attention.

Educationists, linguists and psychologists recognise that reading comprehension involves skills in following the organisation of a passage. Currently, some researchers are investigating several unresolved issues concerning the relationship between passage organisation and reading comprehension.

One way of representing text is through propositional analysis. Kintsch (1974), Meyer (1975) and Frederiksen (1975) all argued that text information is stored in the memory in the form of propositions. Van Dijk & Kintsch (1977) stated that texts could be organised into macro & microstructures. When text was logically organised with its macro & microstructures in the proper order, then readers processed it more rapidly.

The term 'rhetorical structure' used in this paper is equivalent to Meyer's (1975) top-level structure and van Dijk & Kintsch's (1977) macrostructure. It refers to the level of prose analysis at which the "gist of portions of the text is central" (Meyer, 1975). At the microstructure level, the relationships within and between individual sentences are at issue; at the macrostructure level, the issue is with the relationships among ideas represented in complexes of propositions or paragraphs. The relationships at this level tend to be logical or rhetorical.

2.2 Schema-theoretic model and macrostructures

The role of schemata is an important one in reading comprehension, because the schemata the reader brings to the reading task guide the reader's selective processing of the data.

Rumelhart (1977) defines reading comprehension as the process of choosing and verifying conceptual schemata for the text. A schema is said to be "a collection of concepts and associative links" (Ortony 1978) or "a cognitive template against which new inputs can be matched and in terms of which they can be comprehended" (Rumelhart & Ortony 1977:131). Schemata are "hypothesis-driven" and provide an interactive approach to comprehension that allows for the interaction of the schema with the incoming data. It is the interaction that is involved in comprehension of discourse.

The story-schema used to comprehend narratives has been discussed extensively and schemata used in expository texts have also been examined. Kintsch (1987) explains the relations between macrostructures and schemata:

> "Macrostructures are generated from a text by the reader and correspond to its gist, as expressed by a summary or abstract. Macrostructures are hierarchical. At the lowest level, only the most irrelevant or redundant information is deleted under some generalisation. However, these operations of deletion and generalisation are applied recursively, so that more and more concise abstracts are generated until at the highest level only a title remains. The reader's control schema determines which of these facts are relevant to his goals and purposes and the macro-structures then pick out from all these facts those that are most relevant, frequently involving the construction of new propositions (generalisations, inferences) from the originals. The guidance by the schema is crucial to the macro-operators. A macro-structure is the product of some controlling schema and a text; if the same text is read by different subjects with different goals (and hence different schema in control), the resulting macrostructures will be to some extent different".

To summarise, Kintsch's model of the role of macro-structures and schemata contends that reading comprehension depends not only on the local properties of the text and the reader's decoding activities at the sentence and paragraph level, but also on the overall structure and paragraph organisation of the text.

Meyer (1987) discusses the relationships between use of the top-level structure and the schema-theoretic model of reading. Using Rumelhart's (1977) model and the schema-theoretic models of Adams and Collins (1979), which stress both bottom-up (from the text) and top-down (from the reader) processing of text, Meyer applied schemata to expository texts with emphasis on top-down processing. She hypothesised that skilled readers have a finite number of abstract,

superordinate schemata that are used in text comprehension and that if the reader recognises and uses the author's rhetorical structure, he will be able to understand better and remember more of the text he reads.

## 2.3 Reading Strategies and Text Organisation

According to this theory, the skilled reader is one who approaches a text with knowledge of how texts are organised. The reader selects from his repertoire the schema that best matches the text to be processed. Poor readers are expected to approach a text without knowledge of its organisation or an effective strategy for perceiving its top-level structure. Meyer et al (1980) hypothesised that the dominant strategy of good comprehenders in a prose-learning task was the structure' strategy. The processing activities for the structure strategy focus on a search for major text-based relationships among propositions. To achieve this, readers approach text to:

a) look for patterns which will tie together the propositions contained in the text,

b) search for the author's primary thesis which will provide the content to be bound by these patterns (schemata), and

c) search for the relationships in this primary thesis and its supporting details.

## 2.4 Studies of the effects of rhetorical structure on reading comprehension

A brief review of the experiments on expository texts which led to the present study is included here to provide background information on some of the research work on text macrostructure conducted in the recent past.

Meyer & Freedle (1979) explored the effects of different types of top-level discourse structures on recall. The 4 types of structure compared are: 1. contrastive pattern; 2. cause-effect pattern; 3. problem-solution pattern; and 4. collection-of-descriptions pattern. Their research shows that seemingly well-organised text materials differ in quality of organisation, which, in turn, affects quality recalled. The first three types of structure have "an extra link of relationship" over the descriptive structure. According to the interactive view of reading, recall of information relayed by the first three types of pattern, which provide extra linkage, should be superior to that of the descriptive structure. Results showed that subjects who were exposed to patterns 1 and 2 recalled more than patterns 3 and 4. Meyer, Brandt & Bluth (1980) conducted an experiment to predict that readers who adopted the strategy of identifying the author's organisation structure would be able to recall more information than students who did not. Results confirmed the prediction.

The experiments described above were conducted on L1 readers. Urquhart and Carrell, however, carried out similar experiments on the effects of rhetorical organisation and recall on ESL readers. Carrell (1984), using Meyer's passage on "Loss of body water" presented in different rhetorical structures, tested the effects of top-level organisation on ESL readers. Results indicated that certain highly structured rhetorical patterns were more facilitative of recall for L2 readers in general. L2 readers tested included Spanish, Arabic, Oriental (Korean and Chinese) and Malaysian.

## 3 The Experiment

The experiment described below is modelled on Carrell (1984), who in turn replicated Meyer and Freedle's (1979) investigation on whether different organisational plans have a differential impact on reading recall.

The experiment addresses the following research questions:

1) Are there any differences between the two types of rhetorical organisation of expository text - problem/solution pattern and collection-of-descriptions pattern - in the reading recalls of L2 readers?

2) Are there any differences between the two types of rhetorical organisation on the reading recalls of L2 readers at O-Level and at second-year university level?

3) Is there any relationship between the ability of L2 readers to recognise and use the top-level rhetorical organisation of an expository text and the amount of information recalled from the text?

### 3.1 Subjects

40 subjects participated in this study. 20 were O-level students and 20 were 2nd year students on a Bachelor of Engineering degree course in Hong Kong. Chinese is their native language while English is the medium of instruction in the institutes they attend.

### 3.2 Materials

Two versions of a passage with identical content were used. Text A follows the problem-solution structure and Text B the collection-of-descriptions pattern. The rhetorical structures differed, as did a minimal number of ideas necessary for altering the structure. Such differences were explicitly marked in the texts issued to subjects (see Appendix).

### 3.3 Procedures

The two test groups were arranged in a rank order based on students' proficiency in English. Text A and Text B were distributed to the testees alternately to ensure that both were read by readers of comparable standard. Each text was read by 20 students - 10 O-Level students and 10 undergraduates. Students were given two minutes to read the text and were told in the written instructions that they were to imagine that the topic of the text was of interest to them. However, they were not told beforehand that they would be required to recall the passage afterwards.

The subjects were then asked to write down everything they could remember from the text, using words from the original passage or their own words.

### 3.4 Idea Units and Scoring

The identical information in the two texts was reduced to a total of 21 'idea units' for the purposes of marking. The recall protocols were marked. For each unit recalled 1 mark was given, the maximum being 21.

3.5 Protocol Organisation

Each recall protocol was classified according to the discourse type used by the subject to organise the protocol:

a) to be classified under the problem/solution pattern, the protocol had to state a problem and present a solution to the problem.

b) to be classified as a collection-of-descriptions type, the protocol had to offer organised descriptions about a topic.

This classification revealed which subjects followed the top-level structure for remembering information in a text.

4 Results

Recall data on the 21 identical idea units from the two groups of subjects and the two discourse types were analysed with a two-way analysis of variance. (Discourse type x Reader Group).

Table 1: Analysis of variance by discourse type & reader group

| Source of Variation | Sums of squares | DF | Mean Square | F | Significance of F (exact P-values) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Main Effects | 60.850 | 2 | 30.425 | 2.072 | p = .141 |
| Group | 5.625 | 1 | 5.625 | 0.383 | p = .540 |
| Text | 55.225 | 1 | 55.225 | 3.762 | p = .060 |

As can be seen in Table 1, the main effects are statistically insignificant at the $p < 0.1$ level for reader group. However, there are differences between the effects of the text types on the reading recall of L2 readers. In other words, the hypothesis that the differences between the two types of rhetorical organisation affect the reading recall of L2 readers is confirmed, while the hypothesis that the differences between the two types of text structures affect the reading recalls of L2 readers at O-level and undergraduate level is not supported statistically.

Table 2: Recall scores by reader group & discourse type
(out of a maximum of 21 idea units)

| | Text A (problem/solution) | Text B (collection of descriptions) |
|---|---|---|
| Group 1 | 11.20 | 8.80 |
| Group 2 | 10.40 | 8.10 |

Table 2 presents the analysis scores of the recall protocols of the two texts with different rhetorical structures scored by both groups of students. The high level of the mean scores, ranging from 8.1 to 11.2 out of a maximum of 21, is worth noting. This range of scores reflects that the L2 readers in Hong Kong managed to remember approximately 38.6% to 53.2% of the total idea units. Carrell's study (1984) using the same text with ESL undergraduates of oriental origins (Korean and Chinese students at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale) reported a recall mean in the range of 3.33 to 7.67, i.e. approximately 15.9% to 37%. The recall scores for Text A, i.e. the problem/solution pattern, were higher than those for Text B for both reader groups. While both text types convey the same idea to the reader, the problem/solution structure provides the reader with additional schemata. Therefore it was expected that recall would be greater from this text than from the less organised descriptive structure. Data from this study related positively to this prediction.

On the other hand, analysis of the subjects' protocol organisation revealed that while 8 out of the 20 students given Text A, of the problem-solution pattern, failed to recall the information in the schematic sequence relayed by the author, all the subjects given text B, of the collection-of-descriptions pattern, recalled the information much as relayed by the author.

This suggests that rhetorical structures which aid information recall are not necessarily easy to recognise. This has implications for L2 performance, specific training being required in the skills of identifying and then using such rhetorical patterning.

Table 3: Recall scores by reader group & ability to use author's rhetorical structure (Kruskall-Wallis Test)

| | Author's Rhetorical Structure Followed | | Author's Rhetorical Structure Not Followed | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean Rank | Cases | Mean Rank | Cases |
| Group 1 | 11.57 | 7 | 9.67 | 3 |
| Group 2 | 11.4 | 5 | 8.4 | 5 |

Table 3 shows the recall scores of the testees who recognised and used the problem/solution pattern for their recall and those who did not. It can be seen that testees in both groups who used the top-level structure to organise the recall scored slightly higher than those who failed to do so. Since the number of subjects is small, a non-parametric test, the Kruskall-Wallis one-way ANOVA, is used to compare the 4 sets of recall scores of the two groups. Table 3 shows the results using the Kruskall-Wallis one-way ANOVA. The chi-square value is 1.092 but it is only significant at 0.779. Hence, the difference between the 4 sets of scores is statistically insignificant.

To conclude, the experiment results confirm the assumption that there is a "most logical" treatment of propositions which facilitates recall. However, data from my study do not support the hypothesis that there are differences in the recall results between O-level students and undergraduates. The high correlation between the use of top-level structure in organising one's recall with the amount recalled recorded by Meyer et al (1980) and Carrell (1984) was not found in the results in this study on Chinese L2 readers of English in Hong Kong.

## 5 Different Types of Recall Presentation

Fransson (1984) elaborates Saijo's (1975) three different ways of treating the content of the text, and comments on the three different types of recall presentation.

1) The mentioning type of recall presentation which gives a mere mention of the fact that the author discussed a certain problem or concept in the text is common among subjects who have treated the text as some kind of catalogue where they looked for correct answers.

2) The description type of recall presentation is the most common type among surface-level readers. Subjects read with only a general idea of the demands of an expected test. They seem to organise the different parts of the text as a sequence of separate pieces of information.

3) The conclusion-oriented type of recall is given by subjects who discuss recalls relating to a specific problem or concept and provide some kind of conclusion. This type is found exclusively among deep-level readers. It reflects the search for meaning characteristic of this type of learning.

Urquhart (1987) also observes two different types of reader:

1) The 'surface processer': a reader who tries to re-create the author's message - what Widdowson (1984) calls the submissive reader'.

2) The 'deep processer': a reader who explains his thoughts and reflections and summarises his main conclusions from the text. He is what Widdowson terms a 'dominant reader'.

Many of my subjects fit into the description of the 'conclusion- oriented' type. The conclusions drawn were often introduced by speculative ways of making statements which give the reader freedom and responsibility to make his own interpretations and conclusions. Instead of writing down everything they could remember from the passage, there were some subjects who chose to recall the passage by giving a summarised account of it.

To conclude, this study confirms Urquhart's (1987) observation of the 'deep processer'. It also accommodates Kintsch's model of macrostructures - hierarchical structure as discussed in 2.2, in which the reader's control schema determines which of the facts are relevant to his purposes and the macro-operators then pick out from all of these facts those that are most relevant.

## 6 Limitations of the Study and Implications for Teaching Reading

The first step in developing a theory of learning from prose is to gather data about what readers learn and remember from prose.

The purposes of research on macrostructure are:

1 To collect empirical evidence for or against the claims of some rhetoricians and psycholinguists that some patterns of rhetorical organisation are more facilitative of comprehension and recall.

2 To establish what causes difficulties for L2 readers, with the objective of preparing readers for these difficulties by:

 a) sensitising them to the rhetorical organisation of texts,and detecting deviations from "ideal organisation" and/or

 b) simplifying texts.

Like most readability studies, the type which studies how top-level structure affects ease of comprehension and memorability has the flaws of all product-oriented tests which frequently view the readers as a homogeneous group rather than individuals with special needs and different backgrounds. Because a free recall test was used for this experiment and protocols were scored according to a predetermined model, it shares the same shortcomings of all other quantitative investigations on reading. Despite these shortcomings, research studies on rhetorical structure and how they might affect understanding and text processing have provided teachers of reading with a theoretical basis for understanding the notion of prepar.ng students to read to learn. The research also represents an attempt to provide empirical evidence for and against the claims of traditional rhetoricians and psycholinguists that have often led to prescriptive advice to writers.

Research on learning from expository texts has demonstrated that the ability to recognise and use a text's structure can facilitate comprehension and memory. Other studies have shown that direct instruction on rhetorical structure can improve readers' comprehension as shown by the amount of information recalled.

### 6.1 Pedagogical Implications

It follows that the implications that can be drawn for the instruction of reading to help L2 readers tackle expository texts could include the following points:

1) Traditional teaching of reading takes the product-approach i.e. readers are taught lexical items and syntactic structures in order that they will be able to answer the comprehension questions set at the end of the text. Experiments on top-level structure show that the process-approach would help understanding and recall. In other words, teachers should not teach what is tested in reading

comprehension tests but rather strategies necessary to the process of reading which will lead to the product, e.g. teach students the necessary rhetorical structures, schemata and cognitive frameworks for comprehending texts in the content areas. Students should be trained in the techniques which will help them to deal independently with all types of texts.

2) Different cultural backgrounds and perspectives are likely to result in a range of acceptable variations in interpreting texts and events and teachers should be prepared to accept different interpretations.

On the role of rhetorical structure training in the teaching of reading, Carrell (1985) makes the following comments:

> "Such training on discourse types is obviously only one part of a comprehensive instructional program in ESL reading comprehension. As Tierney (1983:9) has said, "It is easy to forget that the mastery of the strategy should not displace reading for meaning." A comprehensive instruction program should also include work in schema availability and schema activation, metacognitive training, comprehension monitoring skills, decoding skills etc. Teaching the prototypical patterns of different texts would be inappropriate unless such instruction occurs in conjunction with helping students, in a number of ways, to acquire meaning from text". (Carrell 1985: 742)

## 6.2 Pedagogical Applications

Some of the pedagogical measures to take in order to achieve the above would be to:

1) Select texts that are well organised and elaborated with causal explanations for low level students. Sensitise students to less tightly-structured texts at a later stage. Before doing so, encourage these students to identify rhetorical structures by a variety of methods, e.g. writing outlines for texts, identifying sentences signalling rhetorical structures, recognising topic sentences and sentences carrying subordinate ideas, etc.

2) Assign L2 readers topics and see that they select their own reading materials round the topics. Using the selected materials, the teacher should help readers to identify different organisation patterns used for the treatment of the same topic and to discuss the author's intentions. For well-written exposition where the top-level structure is implicit, readers will be trained to make inferences about the organisation. For poorly-written expository texts which fail to interrelate the ideas logically, the teacher may have to help readers to re-construct a coherent conceptual structure underlying the theme and development of the passage.

3) Expose students to texts with culture-bound topics. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences in content matters as well as organisation structures used in developing thought patterns, e.g. as suggested by Kaplan (1966).

## 6.3 Suggestions for Further Study

Limited by time and other resources, this experiment only compared two rhetorical patterns using a small sample. Before rhetorical structure research can be of more use to the teaching of reading strategies for L2 readers, more studies on texts of various topics and different

organisation patterns are needed in order to develop a comprehensive theory of rhetorical organisation. Studies conducted on a larger scale can also help to offset the harmful effects of over-generalisations from findings validated by statistical analysis alone.

More research on the interpretation of the suitability of certain rhetorical structures for different language groups should also be carried out. This is essential because L2 students' cultural background may lead them to see a different text organisation as more 'logical'. At the moment, L2 readers rely heavily on teaching materials which are based on research using L1 readers as subjects. More investigations on the diversities/similarities between the rhetorical structures used in Chinese texts and English texts should also be conducted. By comparing and contrasting rhetorical patterns in the reader's native language and the foreign language, the teacher can then help readers with reading problems rather than language problems to overcome barriers to comprehension. The teacher can also give them explicit instruction in text organisation patterns seldom used by Chinese authors and therefore unfamiliar to L2 readers.

If the purpose of reading is to "get the author's message" then the reader should first establish what the writer's general framework or structure is. However, a reader does not read every time with the purpose of "getting the author's message". He may scan a passage for specific ideas or read to update his own knowledge on a topic. In these cases, it would be more suitable for him to work within his own schemata and fill in the 'gap' while reading, rather than look for the author's schema (Spiro, 1977).

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# APPENDIX

Two different versions of the text "The loss of body water"*

## 1. Collection of Descriptions

SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE LOSS OF BODY WATER WILL BE DISCUSSED. FIRST, athletic coaches frequently require wrestlers, boxers, judo contestants, karate contestants, and football team members to lose body water so that they will attain specified body weights. These specified weights are considerably below the athletes' usual weights.

SECOND, THE LOSS OF BODY WATER SUSTAINED BY A 150-POUND INDIVIDUAL EACH DAY IS THREE PINTS OF WATER.

THIRD, loss of body water impairs cardio-vascular functioning, which limits work capacity. More specifically, a loss of three percent of body water impairs physical performance and a loss of five percent of body water causes hallucinations. Losses of ten percent or more of body water result in heat stroke, deep coma, and convulsions; if not treated, death will result.

## 2. Problem/Solution

A SERIOUS PROBLEM IS THAT athletic coaches frequently require wrestlers, boxers, judo contestants, karate contestants, and football team members to lose body water so that they will attain specified body weights. These specified weights are considerably below the athletes' usual weights.

A SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM IS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS TO SUSPEND COACHES WHO REQUIRE ATHLETES TO LOSE BODY WATER. THIS STEP MUST BE TAKEN DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE loss of body water impairs cardio-vascular functioning, which limits work capacity. More specifically, a loss of three percent of body water impairs physical performance and a loss of five percent results in heat exhaustion. Moreover, a loss of seven percent of body water causes hallucinations. Losses of ten percent or more of body water result in heat stroke, deep coma, and convulsions; if not treated, death will result.

* **Key**: Identical content information across the 2 versions is in lower-case letters; different information is capitalised. The words capitalised *and* underlined identify different ideas in the 2 passages. The capitalised words without the underlining explicitly signal the discourse type of each passage

# QUIS CUSTODIET ...?
# ERRORS IN GUIDES TO ENGLISH USAGE FOR HONG KONG STUDENTS

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## Background

In Hong Kong, as in other territories where English is an important second or auxiliary language, students find available to them many books purporting to provide accurate information about the details of English usage. This paper deals with the patterning and frequency of the errors found in some books of this kind, and more specifically with those found in the 1951/1988 book by Fang Lo-Tien.

In the case of Hong Kong, some of the books are produced locally, others in the People's Republic of China. Since most students in both territories have Chinese - though typically different dialects - as their first language, the prevailing patterns of characteristic errors and learning difficulties are similar (though not identical). Books produced in China are thus of use in Hong Kong also.

In these books, the text is usually in Chinese: the authors are normally themselves ethnic Chinese, and presumably believe - reasonably - that their student readers will find discussion of linguistic matters more readily comprehensible in their first language. It is only occasionally that the actual text of such a book - perhaps one aimed at more advanced students, or one produced by a non-Chinese - is written in English. We look briefly at one such book below.

The range of topics covered by these books is wide; some of them deal with idioms (always a problem for learners); others with prepositions, phrasal verbs and other aspects of grammar; others with vocabulary. A number of them, such as the main one analysed in this present paper, simply list a large number of English expressions (often organised alphabetically), furnish one or more Chinese equivalents for each, and give one or two English sentences, with Chinese translations, as examples. In a further section, this may be repeated, commencing with common Chinese expressions and indicating how to translate them into English.

## Comments: General

One can readily anticipate problems arising with such books. Most of the authors are themselves ethnic Chinese, and many of them have learned their English very largely in Hong Kong or in China. Their contact with native speakers of English has not always been very extensive, and the English to which they have been exposed has thus itself been localised in character. Their own teachers were probably not in a position to inform them of when their usage was non-standard. Furthermore, owing to the importance in Chinese society of preserving 'face', authors of this nature (and their teachers before them) may well have resisted any attempts made by native speakers (or others with a more secure grasp of English) to 'correct' the local or non-

standard features of their usage. They are very unlikely to have actively sought correction (or even proof-reading) by such people.

The authors sometimes give prominence to their own qualifications on the covers and title pages of their books (a good example is Chiu 1983). Students in this region are in most cases already unduly impressed by paper qualifications, and are often too ready to believe that anything said by a teacher must be true; and this surely encourages them to assume that all the information given must be correct and reliable. In fact, tertiary teachers of English often find that it is almost impossible to convince students that what they have previously learned from books such as these (or even what their secondary school English teachers have taught them) could possibly be wrong.

In some circumstances, all this might not be disastrous. For instance, if the information given by these books was very largely accurate, there would be no cause for alarm. If, on the other hand, the information related openly not to the international exonormative standard variety, but to a genuine emerging local Hong Kong standard with its own viability, any disparities between the books and the international standard forms would again not matter much, if at all. The information provided would presumably be largely (though perhaps not entirely) accurate as far as the local standard was concerned.

Unfortunately, neither of these situations obtains. Any native speaker of English or any more competent non-native speaker who looks at any of these books will at once notice that a substantial minority of the English sentences given are non-standard. Sometimes the error is minor and there is no problem with respect to the intelligibility of the sentence (though even in these cases the negative impression given as to the level of the writer's English might be very damaging, especially cumulatively). In other cases there is a global error, often interfering with intelligibility to the extent that the sentence might be materially misunderstood or else not understood. Bilingual readers may also notice cases where the English and the Chinese do not appear to be genuinely equivalent.

It should be noted that all this applies to works such as Chiu 1983 (see below) as well as to those of the type exemplified by Fang 1988. Chiu often recommends non-standard usage or cites it as if it were standard; furthermore, the English of his own text contains a fairly large number of errors.

In addition, one is forced to ask if Hong Kong can possibly afford to develop a local standard English of its own. As I have argued elsewhere (Newbrook 1988, etc.), the value of English as far as Hong Kong is concerned relates largely to the contact which it provides with the non-Chinese world. Its internal functions within local society are strictly limited. There is thus very little to be gained, and much to be lost, by allowing or encouraging a local standard (or an uncodified or semi-codified pseudo-standard) to develop, especially given that most of the salient features of local English usage differentiate it from ALL of the mainstream standard varieties of the language (which are themselves becoming increasingly similar to each other). At worst, the stabilisation of 'Hong Kong English' could make the task of students who needed or wished to acquire standard English almost impossible, owing to the fossilising of local forms learned at an early age in the mistaken belief that they were standard (this already happens to a certain extent). English is never likely to be used internally to anything like a sufficient extent, nor is it generally known to a high enough standard of fluency and general competence, for a local standard to obtain a firm basis for development. In the face of these considerations, it seems clear that deviations from the international standard must be regarded simply as errors in a Hong Kong context. This situation must be distinguished from that of places like Singapore, where English is of considerable (not to say crucial) significance in the internal life of the local community, where

levels of fluency are much higher, and where, as a result, conditions at least might be held to support the establishment of a local standard variety rather than continuing adherence to the British or international norm (though the adoption of a local norm might still be deemed unwise on other grounds).

Of course, saying that local usage should be perceived for the most part in terms of learner error rather than of legitimate variation is not to say that there is not a fairly homogeneous pattern of errors characteristically made in Hong Kong and less usual elsewhere. Some scholars (e.g. Luke & Richards 1982:56; Tongue: personal comment) have eschewed the term Hong Kong English, and seem to believe (or to have believed) that such a pattern can exist only where a variety is frequently used internally in the society in a wide range of domains, fairly consciously institutionalised, etc. - i.e., in a second rather than a foreign-language situation, as for instance in Singapore. In fact, there certainly is such a pattern of usage in Hong Kong, so marked that it is often easy to identify a piece of English as having been produced by a Hong Kong person (see Newbrook 1988, forthcoming a). Indeed, this makes it even more difficult for Hong Kong learners to acquire standard English; almost everyone else they know is making the same errors (I am assuming that this is an appropriate term, in the light of the above) as themselves.

I am not, of course, suggesting that only error-free English is acceptable or to be anticipated in a Hong Kong context. Few students will ever achieve this, especially given the lack of support for the use of English outside the classroom. However, the international standard - not a local pseudo-standard - is surely the only reasonable target variety.

Comments: Specific

The books discussed here can be divided into a number of types on the basis of selection and treatment of subject matter, general approach, and author's background:

1) Some books by local authors, for instance Chiu 1983, actually discuss and analyse what the authors believe to be characteristic local errors. Chiu's book is widely available in Hong Kong bookshops and has been reprinted yearly since it first appeared. It is aimed at those students who are about to take the Hong Kong Certificate examination in English, and covers 860 errors or groups of associated errors, in each case exemplifying and briefly explaining the nature of what Chiu considers a common local error. Although this present paper does not focus upon the (often misleading) correction of errors in works of this nature, a detailed analysis of Chiu 1983 and/or similar books would be of great interest.

2) Occasionally one comes across a book of this kind, dealing explicitly with errors, which has been produced by a local scholar of much higher proficiency in English (and/or linguistics), and is thus much more accurate and reliable. Elsewhere (Newbrook forthcoming b & c), I have analysed one such book (Tse 1988), and have compared it with one of the few works of this nature prepared by a native speaker of English (Newbrook forthcoming d; but see also 3) below). Tse's book is a small, slim volume aimed at late-secondary school students, covering 90 carefully selected errors in ten broad linguistic categories and explaining how to avoid them. Since publication it has sold very successfully, both to secondary and to tertiary students seeking help with the details of their English. Tse himself (a lecturer at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong) is unusually well versed in English by Hong Kong standards, and the focus of my paper is upon the extent to which he and I agree or disagree in respect of the relative salience of forms which we both identify as errors. Tse very occasionally identifies what appears to be standard usage as non-

standard; but in no case does he recommend or cite as standard any form which is in fact non-standard.

3) Even more reliable, of course, are the few books of this nature produced by native speakers. So far the best of these is Bunton 1989. Bunton is a long-term Hong Kong resident, an experienced teacher and examiner, and a Cantonese speaker. His work deals with over 300 common local errors, arranged alphabetically under key-words. There are also exercises with keys (much more extensive than those in Tse 1988), checklists of common instances of various types of error, and a glossary. Bunton provides brief discussions of the nature of the errors and frequently offers explanations of their origins. Where first-language interference appears to be involved, he refers helpfully to the equivalent Cantonese expressions.

In his introduction Bunton makes a number of very telling points. For instance, he notes that books (even by native speakers) which list common learner errors without reference to specific countries are of limited use locally, since a large majority of the errors which are characteristic of Hong Kong are in fact largely confined to Hong Kong, and thus are not generally included in such books. Furthermore, he argues persuasively that it is not really possible to avoid presenting local errors in discussion (however much one may fear re-inforcing them), since many of them are so prevalent locally that even very proficient learners will assume that they are acceptable alternatives to the genuine standard form unless the fact that this is not the case is made explicit. Bunton states that his book is not aimed at any particular type of student, noting correctly that many of the errors persist in the usage of highly educated adult users of English in Hong Kong. However, his selection reflects a special (but not exclusive) concern with those errors which are more characteristic of students at lower educational levels (mid-secondary, etc.).

Bunton admits that his format excludes certain kinds of specifically grammatical error which cannot readily be listed under key-words. He exemplifies this with the best known relative clause errors, and also refers to tenses and concord. This seems quite a serious omission, but at least it is acknowledged. It must be admitted that classifying and presenting grammatical errors is not easy; and Bunton does in fact succeed in finding key-words for some of these. Given this fairly major constraint, however, the actual selection of errors seems very reasonable. There are not very many obvious omissions or strange inclusions, and the degree of overlap with the relevant sections of Newbrook forthcoming d is high (the latter work is wider in scope, including as it does purely grammatical errors and also phonological errors, both specific and general).

Items which seem to be important but which are omitted, in some cases surprisingly, include misuses of terms like <u>actually</u>, <u>alphabet</u> (to mean 'letter'), <u>already</u>, <u>audience</u> ('member of the audience'), <u>besides</u> ('moreover'), <u>bias/discriminate towards</u> ('...against'), <u>Christian</u> ('Protestant'), <u>consist of/in</u> ('include'), <u>drop/jop down</u> ('jot down'), <u>exist</u>, <u>foreigner</u> ('non-Chinese', 'westerner'), <u>gain/get</u> ('have'), interesting/interested (as in "I am ..."), <u>like to</u> ('tend to'), <u>master</u> or <u>can master</u> ('command'), <u>neglect</u> ('ignore'), <u>never mind</u> ('it's OK',etc.), <u>nevertheless/yet</u> ('but'), <u>on the contrary</u> ('in contrast'), <u>on the other hand</u> ('moreover'), <u>replace/substitute</u> (and <u>replace/act in a role</u>, etc.), <u>runner-up</u>, <u>saying</u> ('statement'), <u>starting from ... to</u> ('from ...to'), <u>surely</u> ('certainly'), <u>totally</u> ('in all'), <u>used to/be used to</u>, <u>youth</u> (countable), and perhaps also <u>ambiguous</u>, <u>aspect</u>, <u>fact</u>, <u>kind/sort/type</u>, <u>subjective</u>, etc. On the other hand, Bunton includes a number of errors which are not found in Newbrook forthcoming d (or in any other relevant work known to me) but which are clearly worth including.

As one would expect, Bunton makes no genuine errors with respect to usage; there is no endorsement of local non-standardisms, and there are no cases of where a form which is in fact standard is rejected. There are, however, a few cases where Bunton seems not to have noticed

the existence of a convenient standard variant which could usefully be recommended. For instance, he fails to mention this is because when discouraging it is because (under because). Occasionally an item is listed under an unhelpful key-word, as where the construction use X to Y is listed under point rather than use, merely because point is one of the very many verbs which can occur in the 'Y' position in this structure.

4) the majority of books used in this context by Hong Kong students are, however, of a more basic (and less reliable) nature, seldom discussing errors explicitly and simply offering advice in the form of suggested translations and writing strategies. I look here at a typical work of this nature, Fang 1988 (first edition 1951). In this book the text itself is minimal; there are no explanations at all of the principles behind the examples given. Furthermore, as intimated, there is no actual discussion of local errors; the English expressions given are simply rendered into Chinese, with examples (usually two, occasionally one, or three or more, per entry), and vice versa. Fang's book is openly aimed at translators, as he announces in his introduction and as the title suggests; and it is widely used by students up to and including tertiary level, for instance by students of Translation and Interpretation at the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong. The work has gone through nineteen print runs and, crucially, has been revised significantly on two occasions. It has sold approximately 51,000 copies altogether.

I focus here upon the first section, English-Chinese (pp 1-150; 656 entries in all). I stress at the outset that this section and indeed the book as a whole are, naturally, by no means useless. In many cases the usage exemplified is common in native-speaker English and is unlikely already to be sufficiently familiar to most students. In certain cases, such as those of so that and so...that (entries 519-521), the examples given could well help to clear up common and fairly damaging cases of confusion[1]. Reasonably, the work focuses upon 'function' words rather than content words (Fang makes this explicit); these are in general much more troublesome for learners and are harder to learn from a dictionary. The criticisms which follow, while often serious, should be read in the light of the above positive points.

I would level at Fang 1988 (and, to varying degrees, at many similar books) the following major criticisms:

a) It is far from clear how exactly the list of entries was arrived at and why these 656 entries were thought to be those most in need of address. In many cases the selection seems rather unsystematic, and one can readily think of expressions (often associated with those included) which appear to be of equal or greater importance but which have been omitted. Fang admits that the method of collection was somewhat haphazard.

b) An alphabetic sequence is not necessarily the best format; if it is felt to be the best in the circumstances, cross-referencing between associated entries which are not alphabetically adjacent might be in order. This failing is, in fact, not unusual in such books; Chiu 1983 discusses long lists of errors in unhelpful sequences determined in the same kind of way.

c) In many cases the English given is archaic or heavily literary/poetic in style. If used in informal writing or conversation, it would engender in listeners a very strange impression of the writer/speaker. In most cases the usage was outdated even in 1951 when the first edition appeared. For instance, entry 569 recommends the use of a twelve-month ('a year') and that day year ('a year from that day')[2]; entry 117 recommends fall among ('encounter')[3]; etc.

d) In contrast, some entries recommend highly informal usage in what appears to be a formal context. For instance, entry 347 recommends the use of a bit (a bit slower) in an otherwise

formal sentence involving the rather archaic no X but Y construction (no watch is so accurate but it ...)[4]. This is characteristic of the style-mixing, and the misapprehension of the stylistic level of specific expressions, which permeate much Hong Kong writing in English.

e) In some cases, the English expression listed appears not to exist, or at least to be very unusual. For example, entry 100 deals with during good behaviour, which strikes most native speakers as very unfamiliar[5].

f) In some cases the entry is misleading. For instance, entry 1 may suggest to the reader that archaic/dialectal English a- in a-thinking, etc., is the same morpheme as the indefinite article a; they are treated together in the same entry[6].

g) In some cases, a Chinese expression which corresponds with two or more English expressions is given in translation of these English expressions, without any indication that the English expressions, while having some words in common, are not synonymous. The best example is entry 605, dealing with used to[7]. Fang appears not to realise that the difference between used to (always past; followed by stem form) and be used to (any tense; followed by -ing form) is important in English (as it certainly is), or even that they are not synonymous. He has been misled by the Chinese and/or by the prevailing local errors involving these two expressions. This sort of gross error is understandable in a student, but seems most unfortunate in a teacher and author, particularly where, as here, the effect is that students are misled and their errors re-inforced.

h) There are very many errors in the English examples, some relevant to the point at issue and some involving another, irrelevant feature of the sentence given. Some of these errors are simply careless (no plural -s, etc.), suggesting that little or no proof-reading has been done (despite the long period since the first edition), or else that Fang's own grasp of some of the basics of English grammar is itself somewhat insecure. Others involve repeated errors with the use of articles and verb tenses (especially the simple present used in place of the present perfect or the present progressive); and also more complex and specific grammatical and lexical errors of the types often found locally (alphabet for letter in entry 284[8], may be for maybe in entry 300[9], take for eat in entry 306[10], redundant in the world in entry 546[11], positive ever in entry 496[12], go for come in entry 505[13], etc.). Students of 'Hong Kong English' will note that many if not most of the errors exemplified are not idiosyncratic, but are characteristic local errors found in the work of a large number (often, a majority) of Hong Kong students.

Owing to doubts about exactly what Fang intends in some awkward cases, and the undoubted presence of 'borderline' cases, it is difficult to give a precise figure for the number of errors; but there appear to be over 150 sheer errors of the types listed above, and around 60 cases of strange, clumsy or unintentionally ambiguous usage (some of which might count as errors on a less generous appraisal)[14]. This works out to one error/piece of poor usage per 3 entries; around one per 6 sentences given; and over one per page of text. There is no evidence that this work is particularly 'bad' in this respect; this is perhaps the typical level of error in books of this kind.

The student who uses Fang 1988 cannot, of course, know that there are so many errors in the English. Indeed, students would probably be very surprised to learn that there are so many, given the exaggerated respect afforded local teachers (and other authorities such as local textbook writers) by students in Hong Kong and other Chinese communities (see above). Few students will have access to the comments of educated native speakers or of others who will be able to inform them of the true situation. Even if students do become aware that there are errors, they will be unable to tell where these are to be found - especially when the errors are not

idiosyncratic, but characteristically local - unless they are given a detailed breakdown. Their confidence in the entire work will thus be undermined - perhaps unfairly. Alternatively, they may, as noted above, simply refuse to believe the information that the local usage recommended by the book is non-standard.

In respect of this last point, it should be pointed out in addition that many of the locally-produced books which focus on errors more explicitly (such as Chiu 1983) not only themselves include and indeed recommend errors, but in some cases actually describe as incorrect forms which are in fact standard usage. In combination with the above, this clearly encourages the presumably undesirable development of a local pseudo-standard. Of course, both patterns - the endorsement of local forms and, on occasion, the deprecation of internationally accepted usage - are also found in the Hong Kong classroom.

Comments: Summary

I have outlined here various problems arising with Fang 1988 (and with similar books). The last two seem to be the most serious and damaging of these. Fairly obviously, the large number of errors is extremely alarming. In the first place, the dissemination of errors, even where these are random or idiosyncratic errors confined to one or a few such writers, is surely unfortunate. More importantly, many of the errors involved are features of the emerging Hong Kong pseudo-standard (see above), and works such as Fang 1988 are thus implicated in the perpetuation and re-inforcement of this variety. Features of this type are learned from various sources, most obviously from local teachers and locally written material; but those which are used or even endorsed by textbook writers will surely be passed on all the more effectively through successive generations of users, and in the end will become virtually ineradicable.

Explanation

It is of some interest to consider the reasons behind the huge number of errors. One might reasonably ask how it came about that a work which contains so many errors was accepted by publishers (or indeed commissioned in the first place from the author, if it could have been determined at the time on the evidence of earlier work that he was liable to make so many errors); that it was not effectively proof-read; and that it then circulated for so many years and was reprinted, and indeed revised extensively on two occasions, without these errors being corrected; and all this in a territory where English is an official language and was, at the time of initial publication, the sole official language. It should be noted that Fang, in his introduction, invites comment and criticism from readers. On the face of it, it seems that little criticism has been received, or that what has been received has come from sources less well-informed than Fang himself and has thus been misleading or at least unhelpful (one hopes that well-informed criticism has not been ignored).

The reasons for all this seem to involve the more general mechanisms behind the perpetuation of the at times alarmingly low standard of official and 'educated' English in Hong Kong.

a) As noted above, the authors of such works are, almost of necessity, nearly all themselves Chinese, and, owing to the nature of the Hong Kong education system, are taught English by other Chinese. They have limited exposure to native-speaker usage and in all likelihood pay little attention to the details of usage when reading works written in standard English. As a

result of this, they are often insufficiently sensitive to differences between varieties of English. It seems to me, for instance, that very few local users of English, even those who have reached high educational levels, are able to manipulate stylistic differences accurately; and the notion of a distinction between standard and non-standard varieties of the language is often totally unfamiliar even to final year English majors at university. In students' minds there is often only the simple, monolithic concept of 'English'. Naturally enough, the actual usage associated with this concept is the local usage which students have acquired. If this is perceived in any more specific terms, perhaps after exposure to other forms of English, it is still likely to be seen as 'normal' English, and other varieties - including even the exonormative standard - rejected or deprecated as 'unfamiliar', 'strange', etc. (I have had direct experience of this reaction).

b) Given this, Hong Kong users of English, once past a certain level of achievement, are unlikely to seek correction or advice, or even to submit their English to proof-reading. They feel that they already know English well enough to avoid serious amounts of error; they are confident - in some cases even fairly fluent - users of the local variety of English, which they perceive simply as 'English'. For instance, a student whom I once interviewed stated her belief that there could be at most two or three errors in a page of English which she had written. In fact the page contained about forty non-standardisms. Most of these were characteristically local rather than idiosyncratic, and it was therefore to be expected that the student perceived herself as highly competent in English. She had certainly been so perceived by other Hong Kong people who had assessed her in the past for suitability for employment in positions requiring the use of English (see below on this). Even native speakers may have considered her applications favourably (and may have refrained from depressing her by pointing out her errors); given the low overall level of English in Hong Kong, better candidates may not have been available locally. Naturally, those learners who have reached a level where they are able to publish books about English usage are likely to have an even higher opinion of their own ability. Fang himself, as noted, invited criticism in his introduction; but one might reasonably ask why he did not submit the work to a range of competent proof-readers before publication.

It should be noted in this context that many of the errors in Fang's English examples are grammatical in character; and it is clear that complacency over English amongst educated Hong Kong Chinese applies particularly to grammar. This is an example of a very salient feature of Hong Kong students' beliefs about English, namely misperception of their own relative success or lack thereof in acquiring various features or modes of the language. Another obvious example of this, though one which is scarely relevant here, involves a measure of complacency about students' written English in general, as opposed to their speech. Tertiary students tend to assume that their written English is still more impressive than their spoken, which may have been the case during their secondary school years, but which, owing to the multitude of unnoticed grammatical errors, is most unlikely to be the case at this later stage.

The relative lack of perceived urgency with respect to grammar is reflected in Fang's treatment of his topics in terms of vocabulary items, albeit for the most part 'function' words, rather than of the grammatical structures in which they appear. This reflects the common belief of students that the limited size of their vocabulary is their most serious problem with English. Students are much more likely to buy a book such as Fang 1988 with a view to broadening their vocabulary than with the intention of improving their use of words which they know already, still less of improving their grasp of English grammar. They generally believe, quite wrongly, that grammar is much less of a problem for them, basically because their teachers have typically been unable, unwilling or insufficiently motivated to correct grammatical errors. In general, the faulty perception by Hong Kong students both of the degree to which their English is non-standard and

of the main loci of their difficulties is a serious problem; and its effects clearly extend to the work of textbook writers as well as that of students themselves.

c) Given the difficulty of obtaining willing and suitably qualified native speakers, in some domains at least, such proof-reading as is done is in many cases the work of other Hong Kong Chinese, more highly qualified in English or perceived as such. These latter may in fact be clearly 'better at English' (though this is not always the case), and as a result they themselves, and in addition their subordinates, may believe that their grasp of English is very sound and that their judgements (which are in fact often misleading) are reliable. Some such people in fact take it upon themselves to give their subordinates unsolicited and often erroneous instruction on the details of English usage, endorsing their own favoured usage, which itself is often non-standard. Success in Hong Kong English Language examinations and general academic prowess are not guarantees of a high standard of accuracy in English.

d) In this context, there is evidence that even those Hong Kong users of English whose own English is largely error-free (or at least of a standard noticeably higher than average) are mostly much less proficient at correcting others' errors than at producing their own relatively accurate texts. How this can be is not entirely clear. It may be simply that these users of English happen to have had unusually well-informed teachers, possibly mainly native speakers, and thus have learned near-standard patterns of usage; some have studied in native-speaker communities overseas or in exclusive local schools where the use of English is strongly encouraged and where contact with native speakers is frequent. Such exposure does not necessarily mean that these individuals have any very clear perception of which alternative patterns, which they themselves do not use, are also standard, and which are not. Indeed, in some cases they may have had limited exposure to local non-standard patterns of usage, since they have been educated either outside Hong Kong or in a near-standard-English environment, and since even local non-standard English is very seldom to be heard in Hong Kong outside the classroom.

e) Even if a proof-reading service is offered by native speakers, the offer may not be taken up, perhaps owing to complacency, fear of loss of face (see above), or both. As noted, many Hong Kong writers and students apparently think (or like to think) that their English is already largely standard. They would thus feel insulted if asked to submit it to a non-Chinese for proof-reading. Those who are, in contrast, aware at least of the possibility of their usage being seriously divergent from an international norm might fear the loss of face which might be associated with the discovery of many errors by such a proof-reader. In addition, senior local personnel might feel offended at being passed over for this task in favour of 'foreigners'. These attitudes are all certainly quite common, despite much overtly deferential behaviour directed at native speakers of English.

f) When a native speaker's advice is sought, it may still not be accepted or believed (see above). It is common for native speakers who are asked to proof-read passages to find that the original writers dispute their judgements. One suspects that the request is sometimes made in the first place more out of concern for appearances than out of a genuine desire to improve the level of the English or to obtain more information about English.

g) In fact, there is some evidence that many Hong Kong users of English are not really interested in improving their level of accuracy. This applies in particular to students, most of whom have so far used English mainly in artificial classroom settings, where the teacher and other students were all Chinese, and where, as a consequence, errors in usage, unless very blatant or directly relevant to what was being taught, passed unnoticed or at any rate were not singled out for comment. Some other learners are in a similar position, in as much as they have been using English mainly in application letters for jobs, and also in office memos and other such

establishment-internal documents; again, the readers of such material are mostly Chinese. It is a sociolinguistic commonplace (see, e.g., Trudgill 1983:200) that people will not in general be sufficiently motivated to learn new language varieties, including new dialects of languages which they already know (or think they know), unless they can see that they are likely to succeed in learning these varieties and that material benefits are likely to accrue to them as a result. If this is not the case the effort involved is typically perceived to be too great, especially when the new variety and the one which the speakers in question already command are very similar and differ only in subtle ways which generate interference and confusion. We may add that this effect will be re-inforced in cases such as that of Hong Kong, where many of the features of English which are specifically local relate to the structure of the students' first and dominant language, and thus make it easier for them to acquire and use this variety than to learn a standard variety with a structure which is more alien and awkward for them.

What strikes Hong Kong learners of English as really important, practically speaking, is probably simply acquiring the ability to express themselves in 'English' - no internal complexity is imagined - adequately for the internal functions outlined above (i.e. so that another Hong Kong Chinese can understand them). If there is any idea of impressing a reader with their accuracy or with 'good English' more generally, the imagined reader is almost certainly a fellow Chinese, more proficient in English but still a member of their own ethnic and linguistic group. Impressing such people will usually suffice for obtaining the rewards associated with knowledge of English. The statement 'but it's acceptable HERE' is sometimes heard in this context when a piece of English is criticised. Higher standards of accuracy are not perceived as necessary and the effort involved is thus not perceived as worthwhile. In the same way, one reason for students' preferring Chinese to expatriate tutors, even in settings where the use of English is more or less mandatory, lies in their awareness that when using English it is much harder to impress a native speaker than to impress a fellow Chinese (and it may even be difficult to make oneself understood); and some perceive the task of impressing a gwai-lo as one with which they would prefer never to be confronted, and which they hope and expect to avoid in the longer term.

I stress that I am not criticising students for adopting this sort of (partly subconscious) attitude. It may well be that their perception of the situation and its requirements is correct, and that there really is no need for most of them to attain a higher level of accuracy in English. In these circumstances, however, they cannot expect to impress or even to satisfy educated native speakers with whom they come in contact; and any of them who pursue studies in English-speaking countries or apply for jobs involving heavy contact with native speakers will find that they have to revise their attitude and upgrade their English, perhaps at rather short notice and at a relatively advanced age where such adjustment is not easy. Perhaps a clearer perception of students' likely goals (both by teachers and by the students themselves) would help students and educators to come to a reasonable decision as to the level of accuracy to be sought, given each student's goals and expectations.

h) Books of this nature are typically bought and used by students on an individual and private basis. They are seldom adopted as classroom texts by teachers. As a result of this, it is only rarely that they come to the attention of teachers. If teachers at least paid more attention to books of this kind, some of the errors would probably be spotted by those teachers whose own awareness of the status of features of English usage was highest (or, of course, by the small but not negligible body of native speakers teaching in Hong Kong). Corrections would thus be more likely to reach the publishers. Even then few teachers might take the trouble to write to the publishers; the usual response to finding errors would surely be either to correct the student on the spot or to discourage use of the book. Given continued sales, it is clear that this last, at any rate,

has not occurred much; or that any such discouragement has been ineffective. See above on Fang's apparently fruitless request for criticism and comment.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Some of these points are obvious enough, indeed almost platitudinous. It is, however, much more difficult to see how problems of this nature should be remedied. One might argue that the general level of competence among teachers of English and textbook writers, in Hong Kong particularly, ought to be and could be raised; but any programme aimed at achieving this would undoubtedly be expensive and prolonged. In the shorter term, it seems desirable to persuade those who prepare such books to submit them to proof-reading (by suitably qualified native speakers, etc.), and to accept the emendations which these judges suggest. Such a programme might, however, fall foul of the 'preservation of face' syndrome mentioned above. Some teachers or writers may not be happy to admit that their own English requires checking, or that they make so many errors; in some cases teachers (and even students) may adopt dogmatic and even belligerent attitudes to correction of their errors. As noted above, they may even believe that the new forms which they are now being asked to learn are 'strange', perhaps in fact 'wrong', and may be non-standardisms local to the instructor's home area. It may be hoped and expected, however, that these attitudes will be displayed by minority groups only, and that most local teachers and students will adopt more positive approaches to such information.

Perhaps the best course is for native speakers of English - preferably bilingual, but, if not, in co-operation with bilingual Chinese - to produce such books; particularly those dealing overtly with local errors, to which they will usually be much more sensitive. The information imbibed by students - if it is accepted at points where it contradicts local impressions - will thus be more authoritative and very largely correct. Bunton 1989 has already shown the scope for improvement here; it is much the most reliable work of its kind ever produced. Indeed, this work - and also Newbrook (forthcoming d) - may be seen as contributions to the proposed enterprise.

## NOTES

Except where indicated, the focus of Fang's entry is upon the matter in respect of which the entry is discussed here. Where two matters are raised here, the note indicates which of them is Fang's focus (as in note 2).

1. I started early SO THAT I might be in time for the train.(519)
   I got up SO early THAT I was in time. (520)
   This book is SO difficult THAT I cannot understand it. (521)

2. They agreed yesterday morning to travel for a TWELVE-MONTH, and THAT DAY YEAR to meet again at Nanking station. (569; focus on <u>that day year</u>)

3. A tourist went to the mountains for sightseeing, and FELL AMONG robbers. (117)

4. No watch is SO accurate, BUT goes a BIT slower or quicker. (347; focus on <u>so...but</u>)

5. He is allowed to remain in his office DURING GOOD BEHAVIOUR. (100)

6. This affair set me A-thinking.
   They are of AN age
   (1; of also <u>aground</u>, <u>aloft</u>, etc., in the same entry)

7. I AM not USED TO such treatment.
   He USED TO go home on a bicycle.
   (605; no indication of awareness of seriousness of grammatical-cum-semantic contrast)

8. The origin of the ALPHABETS is now little thought of by modern writers. (284; focus on <u>little thought of</u>; standard interpretation with sense 'sets of letters' seems implausible)

9. MAY BE the day will come when all peoples of the world speak only one language. (300)

10. Most reptiles TAKE nothing in winter. (306)

11. A wiser man than you never existed IN THE WORLD. (546; focus on <u>than...never</u>)

12. I shall EVER take care of you so long as I live. (496; focus on <u>so long as</u>)

13. I cannot GO to see you, for I have something to do. (505; focus on <u>something</u>)

14. Examples of strange and/or clumsy usage include:

    The students dived into the water AS so many frogs. (44; focus on <u>so many</u>; either extremely clumsy/almost non-standard or with the ludicrous implication that they WERE frogs; ambiguous?)

    The DEPARTMENT HEAD OF THIS UNIVERSITY is not a position for life (140, focus on <u>for life</u>; note that there are three errors here, the use of the awkward expression <u>the department head of this university</u> itself, the category error involved in equating <u>head</u> (i.e.,

a person) and position, and the first the, which suggests that the university has only one department)

The student worked hard so that he might GET MORE KNOWLEDGE (519; focus on so that; characteristic Chinese concept of education not normally expressed in English)

There are very many examples of errors at the level of grammatical detail. the omission of plural -s may be exemplified by sentences such as:

It is on account of the frequency of AIR RAID that the window panes are plastered. (375; focus on on account of)

Errors involving articles may be exemplified by:

Owing to A trouble in his leg, he could not catch up with you and fell behind. (188, focus on fell behind; note also probable non-standard use of catch up ('keep up'), common in Hong Kong)

He will deliver a speech on THE social welfare. (374; focus on on).

Tense errors may be exemplified by:

The news of the victory SPREADS far and wide (123; focus on far and wide; has spread or is spreading seems to be intended).

The best weapons WOULD BE of no account if the men ARE reluctant to use them. (368, focus on of no account; tense mismatch)

As noted, there are also very many other types of error. See for instance:

ALL WHAT I have to say is mentioned above. (4; focus on above)

You act, as it were, a grown-up boy. (43; focus on as it were; either erroneous commas plus as if you were, or like omitted)

He plays well AT piano. (47)

I have not heard of him LONG SINCE. (285)

He pronounces no less DISTINCT than you do. (320; focus on no less...than)

In establishing a new factory, the PREVIOUS question is where to get the sufficient supply of material. (446; note also erroneous the with sufficient supply)

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# CODE-MIXING AND CODE CHOICE: A HONG KONG CASE STUDY

John Gibbons. 1987. Multilingual Matters 27.
Clevedon, Philadelphia.

Reviewed by Mark Newbrook. Department of English, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

John Gibbons, who is now based in Sydney, was for nine years a well-known figure in local linguistics and TESOL circles in Hong Kong. Gibbons' earlier work on the forms and domains of the linguistic codes used by young Hong Kong bilinguals (e.g. Gibbons 1979) will be familiar to most readers; and he has now extended this aspect of his work with the publication of this revised and updated version of his 1983 PhD thesis, which was supervised by Reading University's then top sociolinguist, Peter Trudgill.

The book is for the most part excellent, and the minor blemishes which I discuss below should not be allowed to detract from this judgement. It involves the extremely careful and detailed application of several theoretical frameworks to an actual situation, studied empirically (by means of tape recordings and 'language diaries' kept by the student subjects); and it is exciting and demanding. Gibbons presents a detailed account, on various levels, of his enquiry into code choice as a factor in the daily lives of his subjects, and of the theoretical explanations which might be offered for the patterning which emerged. The discussion of theory ranges widely; four different approaches to the same material are developed (chapters 2, 4, 5, 6), and in each case the theoretical background and the findings of earlier relevant work are presented (inevitably rather briefly). At the end of each of these chapters Gibbons makes clear, well-chosen and often telling comments about the usefulness and reliability of each successive method and the value of the various insights offered. The book ends with a 'speculative conclusions' chapter.

The data itself seems likely to be as reliable as could be expected, given the difficulties inherent in relying upon self-reporting (which Gibbons admits). Every effort was made to increase the reliability of the material (see pp. 16ff).

In several sections (especially chapters 5 and 6) heavy use is made of statistics. This is one of the most impressive aspects of the whole work. The statistics seem sound; they are for the most part well explained (though in the cases of more familiar terms and methods more is taken for granted); and the reader is led from the figures themselves to consideration of their significance and implications. Those with a limited background in statistics might find this material rather heavy-going, and they might be forgiven for taking Gibbons' conclusions on trust; but careful study of the details will lead the reader to a fuller appreciation of the work involved and to a deeper sensitivity to the subtleties of patterning revealed by the study.

The opening chapter sets the scene with a discussion, in general terms, of the sociolinguistic situation in contemporary Hong Kong. Despite minor instances of incoherence (see below), this section is well-produced, and in particular the summary of statuses and role distributions on pp. 5-7 is one of the best available statements of the facts in such a brief compass. Naturally the findings of the most recent studies of all (e.g. Lin 1988) are not directly reflected; but these have scarcely altered our overall perspective in any event.

The section on language attitudes (pp. 8-10) is perhaps unduly short, especially given the central relevance of this topic to the theme of the work (especially in chapter 6). Some of the points

made here are in fact developed further in various later sections of the work, and some points not explicity made here (such as the existence of an implicit rule forbidding Chinese to use English when conversing together) are also introduced later; but this piecemeal treatment gives an impression of disjointedness. A more systematic and sophisticated treatment might have been in order. This omission appears all the more serious given that the 'conclusions' chapter (7) makes little overt reference to language attitudes as such. In particular, I would have liked to see more discussion (even if largely speculative) of the ambivalence inherent in Hong Kong Chinese attitudes to Western culture, especially in respect of how it relates to local perceptions of Western ideas and to the distinction between the popular and the more serious aspects of Western thought. Understandably, many young Hong Kong people seem to be much more familiar with Western pop culture than with, say, Western social and political philosophy; and this uneven awareness inevitably encourages attitudinal patterns, both positive and negative, which might surprise an observer who was more aware of the whole spectrum of Western life. In particular, the positive aspects of the serious Western tradition of liberalism seem to be unfamiliar, and Western thinking in this area is often unfairly associated with decadence or amoralism. Furthermore, stereotyped attitudes to Westerners and stereotype-based expectations as to Westerners' own attitudes and beliefs are common and salient, and must play a role in forming attitudes to English. It would have been interesting to discuss this, especially given the age-group studied. On the other hand, given the fact that very little Mandarin occurs in the data, it is difficult to see how Gibbons could have addressed himself to the equally interesting question of local attitudes to this variety and to the People's Republic of China, even if he had wished to do so.

The ever-present data base and the underlying question 'what determines the choice of code in each interaction?' give the work an obvious unity. The relevant codes, Cantonese, English, and MIX, together with the less common choices (mixed and unmixed), are introduced during the analysis in 'sociology of language' terms in chapter 2. Here an impressive macrolinguistic analysis in terms of 'decision trees' is provided, relying largely upon subjects' perceptions of the situations in which code choices were made (this is a 'sociology-of-language' approach, as defined by Trudgill 1978). Chapter 3 provides a fairly detailed account of MIX, much of which will be familiar to readers of Gibbons' earlier work. MIX is 85-90% Cantonese, with a predominantly Cantonese-based syntax, and with the 10-15% English lexical element more or less heavily adapted to Cantonese phonotactic constraints. The English lexis is very largely limited to nouns, verbs and adjectives and is of varied semantic type (see below).

The rest of the work takes all this as given, and deals essentially with variation phenomena within the repertoire of the speakers (chiefly code-switching and code-mixing) and possible explanations for these. Explanations are given, first in terms of an ethnographic and microlinguistic perspective (chapter 4: motivation for each particular act of switching/mixing); next in terms of Labovian quantitative formalism (chapter 5; again microlinguistic but now statistical; this is more descriptive than explanatory, but is still revealing); and finally in social-psychological terms (chapter 6; an attitudinal approach to macrolinguistic variation between the entire codes found in the data, invoking stereotyping and other such notions, and incorporating the results of a separate matched-guise study on Gilesian lines). The body of the work ends with the interesting 'speculative conclusions' chapter (7). Given the diversity of theoretical approaches employed, it would be unreasonable to ask for a fully coherent synthesis; but this chapter could perhaps have been more explicit, and certainly more systematic, in drawing together the points made in the previous three chapters; also in avoiding the appearance of introducing fresh concepts at this late stage (see, for instance, the discussion at the foot of p. 131). However, chapter 7 is still very useful as a summary and extension of the main findings of the earlier sections.

Each of the 'approaches' chapters, as a self-contained unit, is very impressive. However, it is perhaps a pity that the micro-/macro- linguistic contrast between the subject matters of chapters 2 and 6, on the one hand, and of chapters 4 and 5, on the other, is not more overtly stressed, in the

conclusion even if not earlier, as a reader could be misled by the general structure of the work and the chapter titles into seeing chapters 4, 5 and 6 as in some sense constituting alternative accounts of the same matters.

The conclusions reached are too rich and complex to be adequately and concisely summarised here; but it may be worth stating some of them. The decision trees presented in chapter 2 reveal a hierarchy in which the ethnicity of the interlocutor predominates (predictably) among the factors determining code choice; next comes interlocutor's (perceived) education level, and only where this is 'tertiary' does circumstance play a major role. Here the major determinant seems to be the degree to which the setting is perceived as part of formal university activity; the official ruling that English is the language of the University prevails in settings such as tutorials, but elsewhere the strong implicit taboo against the use of English (given overt acknowledgement in student terminology) results in heavy use of MIX with some pure Cantonese.

The findings of chapter 4 on code-mixing mostly relate to individual lexical items (etc); but some general points do emerge, one being that ignorance of the Cantonese equivalent of an English term integrated into MIX is seldom the reason for the selection of such a term. With the exception of some technical academic lexis and the names of institutions, the terms involved are mostly so everyday that the Cantonese items must be known to all. Gibbons' analysis of this suggestion, and of the various other possible explanations, while somewhat ad hoc at times, is highly perceptive and of great use.

The Labovian analysis of chapter 5 reveals important statistical constraints exerted by extralinguistic factors upon the proportions of English, MIX and Cantonese which are produced. These involve the subject's sex and former secondary school, the composition and dynamics of the group and (again predictably) the topic under discussion.

Finally, the Gilesian study reported in chapter 8 indicates that the use of MIX relates to the need to combine the positive associations of English (high social and educational status, proficiency, etc) and the predominance of English in the formal learning environment with the crucially important positive associations of Cantonese (and Chinese more generally) - Chinese cultural orientation, values such as conservatism, humility, etc. It is interesting that MIX, as an 'impure' variety, is overtly deprecated by many of its users, but, like many such varieties, continues to be widely used, and clearly serves a most valuable social function in helping bilingual students come to terms with identity conflicts.

There are, however, a number of obscurities. The distinction between the language used IN an interaction and that used BY an interlocutor is not perhaps made entirely clear, and at times (e.g. p. 28) the reader may be startled by a sudden reference to the latter after discussion has for some time been of the former. Even if there were no cases in this study where a reply was in a code different from that of the opening remark in an interaction, this should surely be indicated more explicitly, since it is not axiomatic. In the same vein, the classification of cases on pp. 24-31 could perhaps have been more explicit and more consistent, particularly in respect of the awkward or unusual cases; it is not entirely obvious, without counting up oneself, where these are included in overall analyses and where not.

By contrast, there are very few factual errors, and only rarely does an omission create the possibility of readers actually being misled. One crucial example of this latter is the failure on pp. 4-5 to make a distinction between cases where a local norm is officially recognised and those where it exists in a purely de facto way and is officially repudiated (or would be, if it were known to exist and/or to differ from the exonormative standard form). In fact, as far as English is concerned, few cases of the former type exist, given the relative uniformity of standard English throughout the world and its almost overwhelming monopoly of overt prestige. This is of the greatest significance, since it follows that even in the case of Singapore only de facto norms exist, and Hong Kong English would

appear to display such norms more or less to the same extent as Singapore (often, in fact, in respect of the same features, such as future would). This occurs despite the patently lower levels of proficiency obtaining in Hong Kong, and the clear differences in the roles played by English in the two societies (see Newbrook 1988). The contrast made by Gibbons between Hong Kong, on the one hand, and Singapore, on the other, thus seems rather forced, or at least involves the wrong emphasis. Admittedly, this matter is not central to Gibbons' topic; but it is perhaps worth a detailed comment, since Gibbons is not alone in talking in this way.

However, as indicated above, the total effect of all these minor infelicities is itself not particularly great. At worst the reader has perhaps to work too hard in a few places. Anyone who is prepared to do this and to grapple with the very considerable sophistication of the material will be amply rewarded. Gibbons' application of theory in such a focused way to the empirical details of a particular case is very welcome. In spl :id style it disproves any suggestion that the theoretical ideas involved might be inherently toc gue or subjective for such application; and it provides information which is of great interest ..d could even be of practical use in future planning in Hong Kong. The book is recommended reading for anyone with an interest in language and society in Hong Kong, and for sociolinguists everywhere.

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